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ABSTRACT

This book provides a way for individuals to look at how they make choices in their lives, and how they might make more effective choices in the future. The first part of the book provides an introduction to the CREST system. The meaning of CREST is defined in terms of the five basic choices available to human beings: Caring, Ruling, Enjoying, Sorrowing, and Thinking/Working. The ripple effect of choices is examined, and the analogy of bank accounts in relationships is suggested for making more effective choices. Being an initiator rather than a responder is described as essential for effective choosing. How choices are made, long range goal-setting, developing choice-making skills, learning to initiate, and choosing feelings more effectively are discussed. The second part of the book introduces the CREST system. Learning to demonstrate caring for the self and others, taking the lead with others and the self, developing skills in assertiveness, making enjoying choices, responding with self-sorrowing choices, and identifying thinking/working patterns are discussed. Spa activities, designed to enable the individual to experience the joy of self-knowledge, are included. (LLL)

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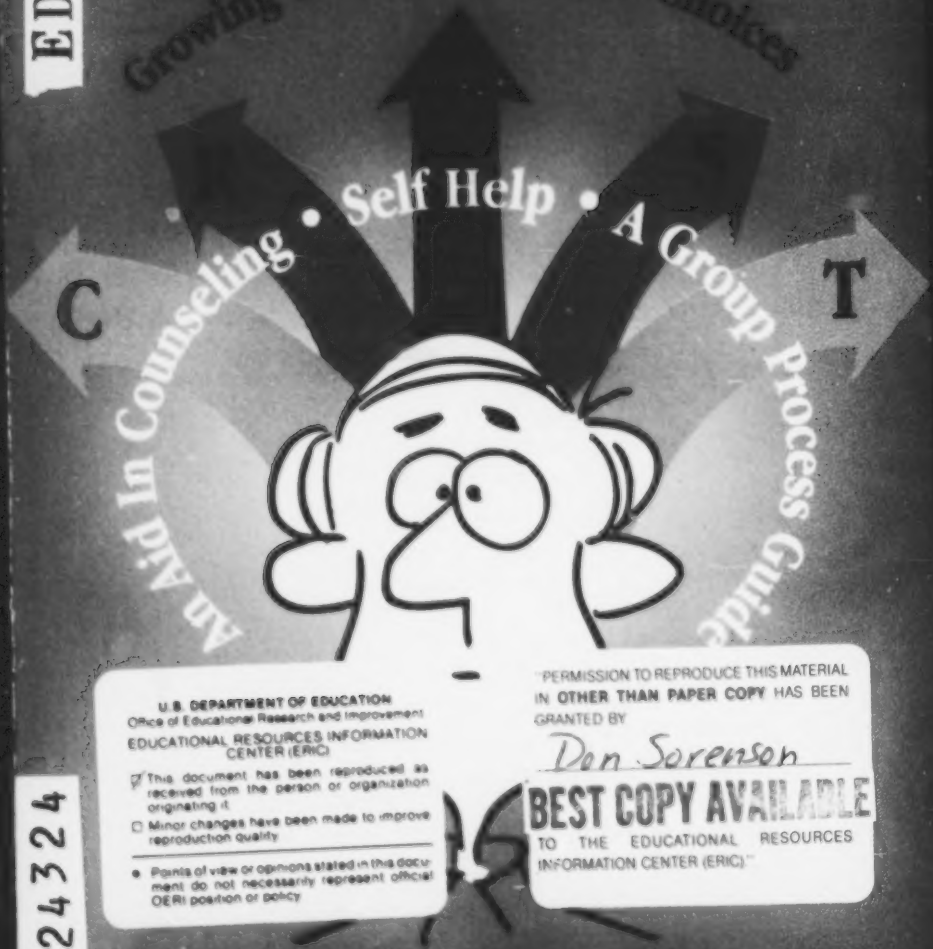
On the CREST:

Growing Through Effective Choices



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On the CREST: Growing Through Effective Choices

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A Guide to
CHOICE AWARENESS

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On the CREST

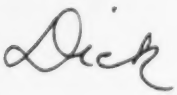
Personal growth,
an aid to counseling,
and a group process—
"for the rest of us"

To my brothers and sisters:

Dale
Bob
Rustie
Millie
Berta
Gloria
Ray

You shared your love with me,
You taught me much about making choices,
You challenged me, and you believed in me.

Thank you!



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Introduction

Welcome

Welcome to *On the CREST: Growing Through Effective Choices.* This book is designed to help you read, journal, and grow—in the direction of making more effective choices.

On the CREST is intended to help *you*:

(1) as a member of an ON-THE-CREST GROUP,

(2) as an individual seeking to achieve self-growth on your own, or

(3) as a counselee using these pages as guided tasks at the suggestion of your counselor.

Besides the obvious meaning of *On the CREST*—riding on the high point of the wave, or reaching a mountain top experience, the letters in CREST form an acronym that infers two meanings. One meaning we will explore in the first two pages of the core of this book.

A second meaning suggests the purpose of *On the CREST*: **C**hoice, **R**esponsibility, and **E**ffective **S**kills **T**raining. *On the CREST* will help you to gain a sense of the ever-present opportunities for *choice* you have available; it will help you to see better how you might take *responsibility* for making your choices; and it offers opportunities for *effective skills training* that will teach you ways in which you might make more effective choices.

Journal Entries

Regardless of whether you are using *On the CREST* on your own, at the request of a counselor, or in an ON-THE-CREST GROUP, we encourage you to obtain a notebook and to make journal entries frequently and in depth according to the instructions at the end of each chapter. We suggest that you date all your entries (e.g., 3/30/9_) so you will know what your thinking was at that time. And we encourage you to reread the chapters and make further entries as you explore different dimensions of the same information. Through your journal entries, you can see how your thoughts change over time. To make that convenient, leave a space after each entry—perhaps starting a new page each time—to allow for additional entries.

Key Words

Notice the key words printed at the end of each chapter. Use them over time to help you to make journal entries that are relevant for you. If, in the first reading, you focus on what the chapter *recalls* to mind, you may wish, in a subsequent reading, to focus on a different idea from the chapter, or reflect on the *feelings* generated in you—as you think about your relationship with a friend and its evolution over time. In a third reading, you might consider how *freeing* an idea is for you, and so on.

The emphasis in *On the CREST* is on helping you to develop an increasingly more positive self-view. As a consequence, most of the key words refer either to positive or neutral dimensions. Take that as a guideline for your entries. Whenever possible, make the choice to reflect objectively or positively, rather than negatively, on yourself and your life. In that way you are using *On the CREST* to strengthen you rather than to tear you down.

Recall. This key word suggests that you use the entry to tell what the chapter calls to mind for you. If it helps you to recall an event or series of events, state what actually happened in as objective terms as possible. Insight can result from recall alone—minus interpretation.

Interpretation. Go beyond recall and indicate your interpretation of the chapter or the event. Label your effort *interpretation*. Consider alternative interpretations that are possible.

+/- Feelings. Explore your positive and negative feelings based on the chapter or the event you are thinking about. Be sure to look for the mixture of feelings that is often present when something generates strong emotions in you.

Freeing. Focus on ways in which the chapter or the event helps you to feel freer about yourself, about what you can do, and about what kind of person you can become.

Self. Consider the implications of the chapter or the event for you personally and for your choices.

Relationships. Explore the implications of the chapter or the event in your relationship with someone who is important to you, and for the choices you each make with one another.

Implications. Consider the implications of the chapter or the event for humankind, peace, work settings, and so forth.

Agree/Disagree. Focus on an idea with which you agree or disagree. Explore why you agree or disagree. Consider also in what way someone might take the opposite position.

Other. Finally, choose your own ideas—your own strategies—for responding to the chapter or the event.

On the CREST in Self-Help

If you are using *On the CREST* as a self help process: Avoid the temptation to breeze through the pages, nodding or shaking your head from time to time. Pause and reflect on what you have read, make your journal entries, and consider how you might implement the ideas in some way in your life. Little growth is likely to occur from a superficial reading of the content. Use the ideas, and you may be helped significantly.

On the CREST in Counseling

If you are using *On the CREST* in a counseling process: Follow the suggestions you are given and really immerse yourself in the opportunity for journaling. You should be able to make more effective and more rapid progress in counseling if you use this source to help you to explore how you make your choices, and consider how you might make them more effectively. Check with your counselor about going ahead in a limited way on your own—not breezing through the content, but taking one idea a day, for example, and journaling about it. Within the context of counseling, use the journal as a basis for sharing the insights you are gaining, and for discussing the progress you are making as a result of your mutual efforts.

ON-THE-CREST GROUPS

"I'm feeling bored."

"I don't have enough really close relationships."

"I'm burned out."

"Life is passing me by."

"I'm feeling a lot of stress."

These statements describe how life looks from time to time to people like you who join ON-THE-CREST GROUPS.

You may feel "just bored" or highly stressed, or you may not feel "connected" to other people. An ON-THE-CREST GROUP will promote your self-growth, provide support when you need it, and every now and again give you a nudge in a more positive direction. Those are three objectives of ON-THE-CREST GROUPS—and you can use such a group. Almost anybody can.

Chances are that you do not take enough time for yourself. As a result, you probably do too little to meet your own needs and then you cannot effectively meet the needs of others. It is important for you to take time out to meet your needs—both for your own benefit and for the benefit of those around you. An ON-THE-CREST GROUP provides you with opportunities to meet your needs for reinforcement, for personal growth, and for developing more effective choice-making skills.

The immediate stimulus for ON-THE-CREST GROUPS came from Bernard Siegel, the author of *Love, Medicine, and Miracles*, in a session at the American Association for Counseling and Development Convention in Boston in 1989. Siegel suggested that people should not have to become alcoholics so that they can join groups that can help them grow in personal ways and progress toward their goals. That idea, plus the work I have been doing for several years on Choice Awareness, led me to the idea of creating ON-THE-CREST GROUPS for everyday, healthy, normal people—people like you.

Guidelines for Organizing ON-THE-CREST GROUPS

Note that ON-THE-CREST GROUPS take a variety of forms since they are self-directed.

- The overall focus of ON-THE-CREST GROUPS is on helping people to grow and to gain *in positive ways*. The accent is on helping one another to achieve greater positive growth.
- To avoid the distractions or schisms that might result, the group should retain a focus on personal growth, and though positive ethical and religious principles should guide the efforts of the group, it should not become a social action or religious forum *per se*. At the same time, a church

might well encourage the forming of ON-THE-CREST GROUPS to increase the sense of fellowship within the congregation and to attract people.

- Groups may be organized within or outside structured situations, but to the greatest extent possible, groups should strive for diversity and inclusiveness, rather than uniformity and exclusiveness.
- Most groups will find it advantageous to keep the membership open, allowing members to feel comfortable joining or leaving at any time. The effectiveness of the group itself should serve as its drawing card.
- Groups may range broadly in numbers and makeup. Eight to twenty-five members may work well, depending on the length, the frequency, and the structure of the meetings.
- Groups may wish to meet for as little as an hour every other week or for as much as three hours once a month, or as often as every week. For larger groups, meetings might best be scheduled for two-and-a-half hours or longer so that all who wish may have the opportunity to become directly involved.
- Groups may wish to designate the leader two sessions ahead of time. Every member should have opportunities to lead the group—or to decline. When you are the leader, your job is to foster open discussion; to help the group to keep moving; to see that the group explores *the chapters, personal action plans,* and *spa activities;* and to encourage group members to listen deeply, to help one another talk, and to share thoughts and feelings.
- The role of members in the group is extremely important. When you are a group member, you are encouraged to share your own goals, gains, ideas, and observations. When others are speaking, you are encouraged to listen deeply and to help others talk. Try reflecting feelings and clarifying when you want to help others. "You seem to be feeling...." "I can tell that was frustrating for you." "I'm not sure what you mean; could you say that another way?" Most of the time it is best if you limit your advice-giving. It is often more useful to help others explore and discover ways to resolve their issues on their own.

The ON-THE-CREST GROUP Process

- *Input.* The first part of any ON-THE-CREST GROUP meeting is devoted to *input*. The leader or any other group member may request that all group members take the time to read the next section of *On the CREST* and make journal entries. In groups meeting for 90 minutes or less, the request may be made at the end of the previous meeting. In groups meeting for more than 90 minutes, the request *may* be made during the meeting—then completed immediately. When journal entries have been completed by most of the group members, discussion is invited. The person who suggested the reading may begin by telling why it was selected, share a sentence or two from his or her journal entry, and invite feedback. Others may then share.

  Input discussion should be basically positive. It may include: observations based on the reading, an idea in the reading that appeals to me, how I might implement an idea, what works for me, in what way one of the ideas reminds me of myself, a member of my family, or another member of the group. After the first meeting, a relevant topic would be: Something I have tried, based on previous reading/discussion. And whenever possible, support should be given for members' gains and efforts.

  Brief readings from sources other than *On the CREST* may be duplicated, distributed, journaled about, and discussed—so long as they are helpful and positive in nature. The designated leader for the session or any member may provide these materials.

- ***Personal action plans.*** The second part of any ON-THE-CREST GROUP meeting is devoted to developing or reporting on *personal action plans*. Each person present who wishes to do so is invited to make a brief statement which may take the form of mentioning "how I am progressing on my plan," or of mentioning a difficulty the person has had in using an idea the group has explored, or of seeking help from group members in implementing or revising a plan. After initial statements are made, one or more of the initial statements is explored in greater depth. Also, discussion may return to a concern mentioned in *Input* time if it relates to someone's personal action plan.

Two cautions concerning personal action plans:

First, both the leader and the group members should be alert to the "why-don't-you-yes-but game" and make an effort to stop it. The question, "What is your personal action plan for now?" should be raised when that game surfaces, and the personal action plan should be reinforced whenever possible.

Second, group members should encourage the individual to seek outside assistance if the scope of the difficulty is beyond the capacity of the group to handle—and at the same time retain its positive focus. Anyone may state: "Your concern seems to go beyond the scope of this group." Anyone may suggest a resource. The group should focus primarily on sharing the person's progress and reinforcing his or her gains.

- ***Spa activities.*** The final part of an ON-THE-CREST GROUP meeting is devoted to *spa activities*, their discussion, and followup. Any individual may suggest that the group members complete a spa activity from Chapter 31 of *On the CREST*. Spa activity suggestions are made during the meeting and journal entries are written immediately after the activity has been completed. After completing spa journal entries, individuals share their observations, tell how they plan to use the ideas that have occurred to them, and receive support from other group members. Followup discussion ensues.

  To add to the spa activities offered in Chapter 31, a variety of related activities may be suggested by the group members. When appropriate (and legal), they may be typed or duplicated in advance and distributed to the group members. Spa activities suggested by the group members should be both helpful and positive in nature.

Closing

For church groups, and for others at their option, a closing word or brief prayer of the sort that follows may be used:

"I know that if I am to love my neighbor as myself, I must first love myself. I know also that if I am to feel love for myself, I must act in ways that show love to my neighbor. I am grateful for this opportunity to grow in love both for my neighbor and for myself."

Additional Thoughts Concerning the Group

The group should be prepared to recycle through content when it is relevant to new members. Those who have been through most of the sections should look at recycling as an opportunity to explore at another level, directing their journal writing in ways that differ from their earlier exploration. At the same time, attention should be given to the question whether it might be appropriate for a spin-off group to be formed when a group has had considerable history, and when new members are available in sufficient numbers to create another group. New ON-THE-CREST GROUPS may be formed around the nucleus of two or three existing group members, acting not as leaders, but as mentors and members.

At some time early in the history of the group, those involved should address a basic question: Do we want to function with other members of the group as partners, in the sense that Alcoholics Anonymous members are partners? That is, do we want to state that we will commit ourselves to be available to others at any time of the day or night to give support and encouragement, and pave the way for referral when that is appropriate?

Why do we raise this question? The truth of the matter is that all people need support from time to time, and in this day of scattered families, too few individuals have a ready source they can call upon. A pledge of availability should *not* be seen as mandatory for ON-THE-CREST GROUP members, but if it is freely given, the nature of the group itself may well be more positive and more dynamic.

A Challenge—Your Choice

Accept this as a challenge: *You* can help to organize an ON-THE-CREST GROUP. Such a group can offer you and others unique opportunities for self-growth, for supporting one another, and for encouraging one another to make positive plans for action.

The choice is up to you.

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A Note to Counselors

The companion book to *On the CREST* is: Nelson, R. C. (1990). *Choice Awareness: A Systematic, Eclectic Counseling Theory.* Minneapolis: Educational Media Corporation. Although *On the CREST* may be used alone, as its title suggests, the related theory book makes explicit how Choice Awareness functions as a systematic, eclectic counseling theory. Thus, to make the most effective use of the ideas presented here—in counseling with individuals or in leading groups—it would be most appropriate to have that source at hand.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Use the journaling suggestions throughout this book to help you think about, and record your ideas for future reference, in your journal. After you make progress in anything, e.g., riding a bicycle, reading, playing bridge, you tend to undervalue your accomplishment because you move on to other matters. Six months from now, and again a year from now, if you make extensive entries in a journal and date them—and keep working at improving your patterns of choices—you may be surprised at how much personal progress you have made.

The more complete your journal entries, the more complete will be the picture you have of what you have accomplished. The more certain you are that you have grown in choice-making, the more you will reward yourself. The more you reward yourself, the more likely you will continue to work at making better choices. You will benefit and others around you will benefit too.

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Sample Journal Entry

After you have completed the reading that is relevant for you in this introduction, as a sample entry in your journal, take some time to think about and then to jot down your reactions to what you have read. Use the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/- Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues. For example, explore what your positive and negative feelings are at this early point as you begin to use this source on your own, or as a supplement to counseling, or as a member of an ON-THE-CREST GROUP.

Next, or in place of the above suggestion, jot down four or five key factors or events that have influenced the patterns of the choices you have learned to make in your relationships with others. Consider how those events have influenced you to make your choices in the way you do.

Need further help? If not, skip the journal example below. If you do need help, the following example may be of use:

Among the factors and the events that Todd listed as influences in his life were the divorce of his parents when he was nine and the subsequent wrenching poverty he and his five siblings experienced following that event. "I guess I make a lot of my choices from a base of mistrust. I'm kind of a closed person, and I have reason to be. But maybe I have some other choices, too," he wrote as his closing observation.

Take time to make a journal entry now. Record the date and this page number. Leave space following for additional entries.

1
The Meaning of CREST

WHAT YOU AND I SAY IS A CHOICE
GOOD MORNING SIS
WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT IT?
MOST OF OUR ACTIONS, AND EVEN SOME OF OUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS ARE CHOICES

CREST stands for the five basic choices we have available to us as human beings. *Caring choices* are our responses to needs. *Ruling choices* involve leadership. *Enjoying choices* are our expressions of positive feelings. *Sorrowing choices* are our expressions of negative feelings. We make *thinking/working choices* when we put our minds or bodies to work on everyday tasks. We make each of our CREST choices for ourselves or for others, verbally or non-verbally, and in what we call *OK* or *OD* ways, when OD means overdone, an overdose, or overdrawn. Here we use the word *choice* to mean any behavior over which we have a reasonable degree of control.

If you think about it at all, do you often wonder at the end of the day what you have accomplished? Do you sometimes have the sense that life is passing you by? Is there too little in your life that thrills you? Does the grass appear to be greener on the other side of the fence? If any of those complaints fits you, *On the CREST*—a read/journal approach to personal growth—can help you.

On the CREST, which is based on the theory called Choice Awareness, works with the skills and the vocabulary you have. Before you finish the first few pages of this book, you will be introduced to all eight of the key terms in the system, including CREST.

CREST Defined

CREST. That is what we call our system. Think of the crest of a wave or the crest of a mountain—even think of toothpaste if it helps your recall. We want to help you spend more time *On the CREST*, at the peak of your existence, on top of things in your life.

The letters in CREST represent the five basic choices we have available to us as human beings living in the world: Caring, Ruling, Enjoying, Sorrowing, and Thinking/Working. These five terms, all familiar, are five of the terms you need to master. Each of them is used more broadly than you have thought about until now, but there are no big surprises in store.

1. **CARING CHOICES.** Whenever you use words and/or actions to meet a need or to be helpful, you are making caring choices. The question: "How are you today?" and taking flowers to a friend in the hospital suggest the range of caring choices. We will explore each of the choices in depth as we go on, but the important thing to tie to the concept of caring for now is the four-letter word *need*. Whenever your actions or words are designed to meet a need, you are probably making a caring choice. There is another side to caring choices; those that are inappropriate or overdone are seen by others as smothering.
2. **RULING CHOICES.** Ruling choices are those things you do and say through which you show leadership. Whenever you *lead* you are making what we call a ruling choice. When you ask a friend to come over for dessert you are showing leadership. If you shout at someone: "Don't you ever do that again!" you are also leading. People like being led—where they want to go—but they dislike being dominated. Ruling choices that are seen by others as overdone are viewed as dominating.

   At first we planned to call this choice Leading. But frankly, CLEST is not as memorable as CREST. And there is another advantage to the use of the term ruling: it can serve as a

warning that the overuse of leadership choices does not suit others very well; people do not like to be dominated.

3. **ENJOYING CHOICES.** Enjoying choices include all the things you do and say to express *positive* feelings. A hug, or a statement such as, "You did a good job on that," are at one end of the range of enjoying choices; teasing and otherwise enjoying oneself at the expense of someone else are at the other end of the range.

4. **SORROWING CHOICES.** Sorrowing choices include all the things you do and say to express *negative* feelings. It is inevitable, if you are living in this world, that you will have negative feelings; when you act on them you make sorrowing choices. You can express sorrowing choices in three main ways. First, through clear statements of what is troubling you: "It's hard for me to concentrate today; my favorite uncle is in the hospital." Second, through keeping your feelings inside, feeling sorry for yourself, and saying such things to yourself as: "Oh, woe is me." Third, through taking your negative feelings out on others: yelling, table-pounding, name-calling, even stealing. The first of the three options is far better than the other two.

5. **THINKING/WORKING CHOICES.** Thinking/working choices include the things you do and say that involve thought and work—whether you do the work in your head, on paper, with machines, or with people. Since all choices involve the brain and some effort, in a genuine sense thinking/working is a part of all choices. We use the label thinking/working for choices that *do not* emphasize meeting needs, exercising leadership, or expressing positive or negative feelings. Still, on most any day of your life you make more choices that are primarily thinking/working than any of the other choices—often more than all others combined—as you think ahead, recall, labor over tasks, ask or answer questions that call for information, or even as you procrastinate.

There is a great deal more to be said about these choices. In these pages we will clarify them and show you how to use them. Suffice it to say at this point that CREST choices are the heart of the Choice Awareness system. They can be used as guides to better choices in your life.

Choice Defined

One of the words we have already used a great deal is the word CHOICE, the seventh of the key words in On the CREST and the Choice Awareness system. CHOICE is a word you learned so early in your life that you probably have not thought about what it really means. Here, choice is used to mean any *behavior over which you have a reasonable degree of control*. The words you say and the things you do are within your control. Nobody pulls a string in your back to make your mouth move or to cause you to behave in particular ways. Your words and actions are choices. Even some of your thoughts and feelings are choices.

You are choosing all the time—moment by moment throughout your day. You choose your way through life.

That is the biggest idea in this whole system we call Choice Awareness—the idea that you choose your way through life. If you are like most people, exploration of On the CREST and Choice Awareness will give you a greater sense of freedom while helping you make choices that feel more positive to you. And at the same time it will help you make more responsible choices.

A tall order. But one that we can fulfill—together.

The OK-OD Continuum

CREST and the five CREST choices include six of the eight key terms explored in *On the CREST*. The seventh term is CHOICE. One more term will complete the picture. It is a parallel term to one you know well. The term you already know is OK. Its counterpart in the Choice Awareness system is OD.

Think of each choice you make as falling somewhere on an OK—OD continuum. Choices at one end of the continuum are OK choices; choices at the other end of the continuum are OD. When you make an OK choice you do something that is acceptable for yourself and anybody else who is involved. But all OK choices are not equal; neither are OD choices.

OK choices can be major or minor. If you hug someone you have not seen for a long time, you are doing something special to make up for the omission of all the little, ordinary choices you have not made on a daily basis. If the other person feels really good about your choice, you have made a major OK choice. If you hand someone a paper he or she dropped, that is OK too—a minor OK choice.

When you make an OD choice, you do something that is not fully acceptable for yourself or for any other person who is involved. OD choices can also be major or minor. For example, shouting at someone and criticizing him or her severely are likely to be seen as major OD choices. If you forget to call someone about a rather insignificant matter, that is OD too—a minor OD choice.

The term OD is borrowed from three sources: First, cooking. A choice that is OD is like food that is overdone; it loses its taste or it may be totally indigestible—and some of our choices, too, may be seen as "tasteless" or "indigestible." The second source is drug or alcohol abuse. A choice that is OD is like a drug or alcohol overdose—the term is used here to include moderate overdoses, headaches or hangovers, as well as those that are fatal. Some person-to-person choices create hangovers that last a lot longer than those caused by drugs or alcohol; they may even destroy relationships. The third source is banking. An OD choice is like a withdrawal from a bank account—it creates or increases a deficit; more may be drawn from an account than it contains. OD choices reduce a balance or increase a deficit that is already present in a relationship.

The Purpose of *On the CREST*

On the CREST is designed to help you to make your CREST choices in OK rather than OD ways—both for you and for those who are important in your life. You have taken one step on the road to progress if you see that you may be overemphasizing one kind of choice and underemphasizing another, in just one of your significant relationships. You have taken the second step if you see that you have unlimited opportunities to make more effective choices. We will help you to see how you can use your opportunities to achieve more time *On the CREST*—through making more effective choices.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Now that you have read this chapter, make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues. Next, or in place of the above suggestion, jot down notes about a relationship you value that is not going as well as you like. Based on this very brief introduction to the five CREST choices—Caring, Ruling, Enjoying, Sorrowing, and Thinking/Working—see if you can figure out which of the five choices you make too often with that person, and which choice you do not make often enough. To the extent you are able to at this time, discuss how you use each of the five choices with that person. Reflect on your findings: what do they mean to you?

An example may be of some use with this entry.

Marie thought about the poor relationship she had with her 13-year-old son, Paul. It was easy for her to figure out that she was not making enough enjoying choices. "I miss the easy dialogue and the fun I used to have with Paul," she wrote. When Marie tried to figure out which choice she made too often, the decision was harder. She could readily see that she was too bossy with Paul: "I make too many ruling choices—but I make a lot of thinking choices, too, and I make tons of sorrowing choices," she wrote. She finally settled on sorrowing as the choice she made that bothered her most.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

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2
The Ripple Effect of Choices

Choices are like stones tossed in a pond. Their effects ripple outward, and on and on they go. If your life is stagnant, you can toss in enjoying choices to change the mix. If it is too agitated, you can calm it by making gentle self- or other-caring choices.

Toss a stone in a still body of water and the ripples extend outward in widening circles. Think of the five CREST choices we have introduced you to—Caring, Ruling, Enjoying, Sorrowing, Thinking/Working—as stones you can toss here and there into your own quiet pond. The circles you create grow outward, on and on, they touch, they interact, and they continue moving in new patterns, until the surface of the entire pond shimmers with movement. In your relationships, as in nature, the movement gradually subsides and eventually the pond is still again, unless the wind whips the surface, or you, standing on the shore, toss more stones into the water.

The Ripples You Cause

Suppose now that "your pond" has not been quiet, that you have been busily agitating its surface by plunking stones in one after another as far as you can reach. Its surface may look busy, even frantic, in comparison to still waters.

Your life may be like a placid pond, it may be like a rushing stream, or it may fluctuate. If you are satisfied with your life, if your relationships are basically positive, and if you feel good about yourself, you may need only to explore the balance you have achieved, decide what you do that keeps the surface ripples moving to your satisfaction, and maintain your patterns of choices.

All of us need quiet times and active times, few of us need to be engaged in a constant swirl of activity, and few of us want to live our lives without any ripples. Think about "your pond" as you explore your choices. Would you like it to be different? In what way? You can stir up the waters or create a more peaceful place for yourself by changing the mix of your choices. Is your life stagnant just now? Toss in a few enjoying choices. Is your life heaving with action? Quiet, internal, self-caring choices, or some caring choices sent another person's way, may gradually restore calm.

The Ripples Caused by Others

Are you thinking, it is other people who keep the waters quiet or get them churning?

Others *do* make choices, but it is the stones *you* pick up, toss, or leave on the ground that *you* can make choices about. You *cannot* make others' choices. You *can* do unto others as you want them to do to you. You *can* ask others to change what they do. But others remain free to choose on their own. It is *your* choices you can do something about. And that is no small matter.

Making Your Choices

Much of the time, instead of making random actions that plunk here and there on the surface of a pond, you make your choices in clusters. One good or bad turn, one OK or OD choice, leads to another. A friend pays you a compliment, you return the favor; a co-worker makes a snide remark, you try to top it; and the next choice tends to go in the same direction. OK and OD choices may be more

like winds across a pond than like stones tossed in. You can stir up the wind and get your becalmed sailboat moving with OK choices. OR, when the waters are churning and the sails are at fullest billow, you can add to the problem by making OD choices, which, like winds from a new direction, risk swamping your boat or snapping your mainsail.

Something to Think About

Think about the kinds of choices you make when your pond is becalmed or churning. Then think about the kinds of choices you could make if you do not like the scene before you.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

After you have completed reading this chapter, make a journal entry using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues. You may then continue your notes about the relationship that is not going as well as you like. What are the ripple effects of *your* choices in that relationship? What choices can *you* make to stir up the waters if the relationship is becalmed? What choices can *you* make that might calm the waters if the relationship is too agitated?

Need help? Here is an example:

Marie used her journal to explore the ripple effects of some of the choices she made with her son Paul: "I keep warning him about one of his friends," she wrote, "and now he doesn't share with me like he used to. To calm the waters, I need to let him know I appreciate him. I need to say things like: 'You look nice. Thanks for your good work on the chores. You've certainly got a lot on the ball...'" Marie continued to reflect at length on her findings.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

3
Your Accounts

The analogy of "bank accounts" in relationships is useful in making more effective choices. OK choices add to, while OD choices subtract from, accounts with others.

The idea of OK and OD choices can be used to expand the analogy we used when we suggested that the term OD can mean overdrawn—as in banking. Think of each of your important relationships as being like a joint bank account that you each add to and subtract from.

Adding to Your Account

Let us say you have a friend named Fred. You say "hello" to him and that puts a small deposit in the account. He says, "I missed you at the get-together at Pat's. I needed someone interesting to talk with." His deposit has caused the account to grow perceptibly.

We can put some figures to that. If the most superlative choice you could possibly imagine with any other person is assigned a value of +10, what is your hello worth? It is rather ordinary so we might assign it a value of 1. If it was enthusiastically delivered, make it 2. If we assign it a 1, then what is Fred's warm response worth? 5? Let us assume a prior value for your account with your friend Fred of +78, since it is in pretty fair shape. Your account has now grown to a value of 84.

Value of the account	78
Your hello	+1
Fred's warm response	+5
NEW PRESENT VALUE	84

Subtracting from Your Account

Suppose you continue by saying, "I can't figure out what you see in Pat's friends. They're losers. That's why I told them I was busy." Fred then replies, "Well, you never want to do anything. It's better than sitting around watching TV like you do." If the most negative choice you could possibly imagine with any other person is assigned a value of -10, what is your comment worth? Let's assign it a negative 3. And what about Fred's reply? Let's give it the same score. After two comments, your account has decreased to a value of 78.

Value of the account	84
Your critical comment about Fred's judgment	-3
Fred's response	-3
NEW PRESENT VALUE	78

You have had four interactions and the balance in your account is back where it started. Not bad. Still, it is unfortunate to waste a good beginning and settle for a no-gain outcome. And the last bit of dialogue will tend to set up what comes next. After Fred's comment about you sitting around watching TV it *is* possible for you to make

a really positive, warm response. More likely, though, you will feel compelled to say something negative. For example, "There you go again, dragging out the same old complaint"—and the net value is now down three more points. Fred may then get defensive, or go on the offensive, and the balance stutters downward.

Positive Accounts

One thing about the figures for you and Fred: Whether the account is at a present value of 84 or 78, the balance is positive. And there is *no limit* to the potential value of the account. You two can add endlessly, and the balance in the account will continue to grow. Practically speaking, one or both of you may begin to take the relationship for granted and slip into a pattern of making more +1 and +2 responses and fewer +3s and +4s, and your occasional negative responses will have fewer positives to counterbalance them. It does not have to be that way, however.

Any relationship with a reasonable balance can handle a few negatives. Even the bickering you and Fred do over your TV watching or his friends does not have to cause a genuine rift, if you each contribute more OK than OD choices to the relationship.

Negative Accounts

A similar thing occurs in accounts that are already "in the red"—the negative balance tends to increase. And what is worse, just as a real bank applies service charges or penalties when an account is overdrawn, each of you—as a kind of banker for the other person's choices—assesses penalties or service charges when the account is in the red, and the balance falls even lower.

Suppose you have a poor relationship with a relative (-102), and you see "Cousin Maude" over a holiday or vacation. She asks you if you have come to your senses over the issue that divided you last time. You snap, "Don't dig up that old stuff again. As far as I'm concerned it's dead and buried." The figures might look like this:

Value of the account	-102
Cousin Maude's challenge	- 6
Your snappish response	- 4
NEW PRESENT VALUE	-112

Now suppose that you decide not to fall into the trap Cousin Maude sets for you. You are aware of her tendency to pick at old sores, so you get yourself ready to speak *first* when you see her. You notice what she is wearing and say, "Why, Maude, it's good to see you. That color really becomes you." Maude replies, "What's that? Oh, this thing's so old it hardly has any color left." Still, you notice her smile, and you decide she did the best she could at receiving a compliment. The scorecard might show:

Value of the account	-102
Your compliment	+ 5
Aunt Maude's response and smile	+ 2
NEW PRESENT VALUE	- 95

The difference between the interaction in which Maude speaks first (with scores of -6, -4) and the one in which you take the controls (with scores of +5, +2) is seventeen points. In the first instance the account goes down and will probably continue in that direction; in the second, the movement is upward and it is easier to choose to make it continue in that direction.

There is no limit to the positive *or* negative value of the account. You can subtract endlessly, and the balance in the account will continue to decrease.

The Effects of OK and OD Choices

OK and OD choices do a lot for your mental health—but in opposite directions. It is up to you to control your part of the interaction. You can affect the direction it is taking. On the CREST does not suggest to you that you never make another OD choice for the rest of your natural life. However, it does suggest that you keep as many of your accounts as possible "in the black"—through making more OK than OD choices.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Complete your reading and make a journal entry using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues. Use your entry to help you think about some of your strongest and some of your weakest relationships with people. Jot down the names or invent a code for these people and put some kind of numerical value on your relationships with them. The actual numbers do not matter, it is the relative strength of each that is important. Write your observations about the typical choices you make in those strong and weak relationships and whether or not they are OK or OD.

Example:

Gregory thought about his weakest relationships—with his wife and his boss. He assigned a value of -200, to each. On the other hand he valued his relationship with his friend Dale at almost that level on the positive side, and he figured that by comparison his relationship with two of his closest co-workers, Anson and Shirley, were pretty good—about +75 each. He realized that with Dale and to some extent with his colleagues he made many enjoying choices and showed some real caring for them. He could think of many reasons for his poor relationships—all of them were the fault of his wife and Mr. Lawson. Gradually he realized that he seldom made enjoying or caring choices with either of them. That gave him much to think about.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

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4
Initiating and Responding

Children learn to be responders rather than initiators. Like many people, you may have carried the habit of being a responder in many circumstances into adulthood. Being an initiator at least part of the time is essential for effective choosing. You can modify your pattern of initiating and responding. It is up to you.

Learning from Childhood Experiences

When you were a child you may have heard adults say, "Children should be seen and not heard," and, "Speak when you're spoken to." If so, you learned to wait for adults to take action or to open up issues, and then respond. A great many of us did. In all likelihood these messages did not ruin your psyche, and you made the gradual transition to being a reasonably articulate grown-up.

You were fortunate if the adults in your life had a fine instinct for encouraging you to achieve gradual independence, and you experienced their trust and lived up to it well. If you were among the fortunate few, you grew gradually, suitably, and painlessly into a secure adult who can initiate and respond well.

Perhaps you were not so blessed. Parenting involves many difficult and subtle skills, and if you were not brought along carefully and effectively, you may have endured a longer period of acquiescence than is desirable, or you may have experienced a period of adolescent rebellion that left you with a mix of feelings ranging from powerfulness to guilt. If you were a rebellious adolescent, part of what you did was to assert yourself, act on your own, and let the grown-ups around you know that you had ideas of your own.

Emerging into Adulthood

Ideally speaking, over time, you have become very much your own person, unaffected by parental injunctions—be seen and not heard, speak when spoken to. You walk into a room of strangers feeling very comfortable. You do not feel under pressure to initiate dialogue or to wait until others make the first move toward you. If so, that is just great. If not, welcome to the majority.

If you are like most people you have *either* carried over these childhood messages to some degree—so you wait for others to take action first, *or* you feel an internal pressure that says, "I'm an adult now and I must establish myself. I *must* initiate interaction."

Responder or Initiator?

Most people most of the time see themselves as *responders* rather than as *initiators*. If you had a Cousin Maude you expected would bring up some old issue when you met her for the first time in a year, what would you do? Would you steel yourself for whatever she might say and dread the agitation she would cause in you? Would you take the initiative and try to direct the discussion toward another topic? Do your answers suggest that you are a responder, an initiator, or both?

Does it matter whether you are an initiator or a responder? Yes. It matters a great deal.

Consider your interaction with your Cousin Maude—or whoever takes control in your life in ways you do not like. If you play the responder role, you fall victim to whatever she offers. You give her the controls to start the dialogue in the direction she chooses. You hand over that power to her, knowing full well that she will probably use the opportunity in a negative way.

Do you have any genuine alternative?

A Personal Example

Let me personalize my response to that question. My oldest sister, Rustie, is a person I have come to enjoy more and more in recent years. A few years ago it became logical for me to stay in her home when I went to see my family in Massachusetts. Rustie is a very strong person, and I saw the scenario as one in which she manipulated me into the younger brother role—I was told what to do and advised on various issues. Needless to say, I did not look forward to my first visit under the new circumstances.

Since I had been working on the elements of Choice Awareness, it occurred to me that, just possibly, a small per cent of my problem with Rustie might be my own behavior. I planned a strategy for my visit—an altered set of behaviors. I decided to make my feelings and wants known, to offer opinions of my own, to suggest things we might do together and separately, and to function at least some of the time as an initiator.

The visit was a huge success!

I learned that when I played the younger brother role, Rustie was perfectly willing to play the role of the older sister. She learned how to do that well—as the oldest female in a family with five younger siblings. In addition she has two daughters, a pair of sons-in-law, and grandchildren. If anyone was willing to play the part of the younger person, she was glad to take control. But when *I* played the role of the mature adult who had ideas, suggestions, wants, and needs, Rustie treated me as an equal. Marvelous!

The alternative to playing the part of a responder, I learned, is to take myself in hand and become an initiator, at least some of the time, with at least some of the people with whom I am in contact.

Assessing Your Place on the Continuum

Where do you fall on the responder-initiator continuum? Think about your behavior in an elevator, a doctor's office, or a room full of strangers. That can help you assess your place on the continuum.

1. You are an *initiator first class*—if you walk into most such circumstances with an open attitude, if you are *usually* the one to speak first, if you expect to be received by others in positive ways, and if it does not bother you unduly if the other person does not respond positively—regardless of that individual's age, sex, or physical appearance.
2. You are an *initiator second class*—if you *sometimes* make the first move, if you sometimes wait and hope the other person will make the first move, and if the appearance, the age, and / or the sex of the other person has a genuine affect on whether or not you initiate.
3. You are a *responder second class*—if you *usually* wait a little while, then occasionally give yourself permission to speak—after you have determined that the situation is quite safe and the other person is even less of an initiator than you are.
4. You are a *responder first class*—if you hope the other person takes the initiative and you *seldom* do so, if you are unlikely to initiate except with children or other people who present little or no threat, and if you rationalize the silence by thinking, "He or she wants it that way."

If you are a first-class responder, you can change. If you are an initiator all the time, you can change. Think of it this way: If you want a good relationship with another person, ideally each of you should be the initiator somewhere near half of the time. A 60-40 split is probably reasonable and acceptable. A 75-25 or 90-10 split probably means that one person is overly dominant—to the detriment of the relationship—and the other person in the pair may feel downtrodden, or will eventually come to feel that way.

Chances are you are an initiator with some people in your life and a responder with others. There may be some people in your life, young people perhaps, with whom you feel you must make all the moves, and from whom you may get precious little dialogue without feeling like you are "pulling teeth." If there are people with whom you must make all the moves, you probably feel a burden because you always have to initiate. It may not be a comfortable role

for you. There may be others in your life, parents perhaps, or supervisors, who do not seem to allow you the room to initiate, or for whom you wait to take charge. If there are, you probably feel some resentment because you are not being treated—or you are not treating yourself—like a mature person. In either case your habits may well be a major part of the problem.

As I found with my sister, if you change your pattern of actions, you may find that the other person will shift his or hers. A word of caution: If you are going to make a change in your pattern of behavior, you might want to share your plan with the person involved. You might tell your 15-year-old son that you think it is important for him to learn to take more initiative with adults and that you plan to make fewer first moves in the hope that he will take advantage of the opportunity. You might tell your aunt that you are frustrated with yourself because you always wait for her to take the lead, but from now on you plan to show more initiative in the relationship between you.

Changing Choices

On the CREST suggests that if you have relationships in which you seldom initiate, or in which you are overly dominant, you can change—and you will change gradually if you are wise. The patterns you have developed have emerged over time, so they may be difficult to change. Keep your expectations of yourself reasonable, and take pleasure in the evidence of small changes over time. A long march begins with one step, as the saying goes, and continues a step at a time. You cannot suddenly change your interpersonal relationships. You have to be persistent and put forth effort if you want to change patterns, but you *can* change them—because they involve choices.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Complete your reading and make a journal entry using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues. Then if you wish, use your entry to explore three of your relationships—one with a supervisor or parent, a second with a friend or other equal, and a third with a child or someone you supervise. Discuss the extent to which you are an initiator and a responder in each of these relationships. Put a ratio on each—"I'm 30 per cent initiator and 70 per cent responder with my boss; with my friend Gene it's more like 40-60; with my younger brother the ratio is about 80-20." If you like what you see, resolve not to change a thing, but make note of the kinds of choices that help you keep that relationship in good condition. If you are unduly dominant or submissive in any of your three relationships, consider the CREST choice you might make more often and the one you might make less often.

Example:

Gregory—referred to in the last chapter—considered three of his significant relationships. He seldom spoke a word to his wife unless she talked first; that left him on the responder end of the relationship—a 20-80 ratio. With his friend Dale, initiation was nearly equal—45-55, he figured. When Anson came on the job Gregory had been asked to show him the ropes. They were really equals now, but Gregory calculated that he still did 70 per cent of the initiating. Anson was more than willing to leave the power in his hands, but, Gregory noted, "I don't like it that way anymore."

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

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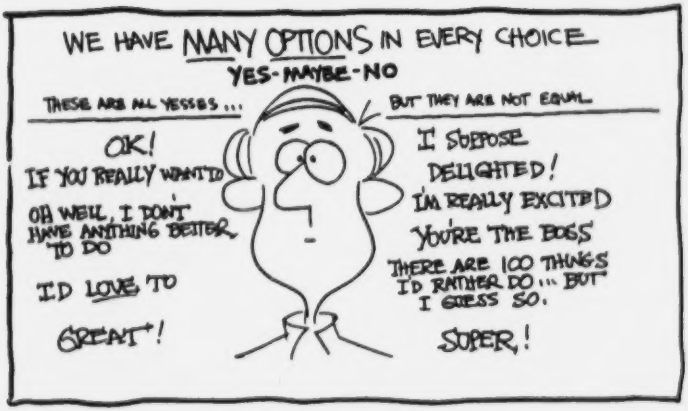
5
The Right Choice



In everyday interactions, either/or thinking can be a problem. We have numerous choices available to us most of the time, and many of them may be equally suitable. We often make our choices by using branching; we collect information as we go along, and we let each piece of information influence our eventual choice. How we make our choices is often as important as which choice we make.

How often in your life do you have two and only two choices available to you, one absolutely right and the other absolutely wrong? In point of fact it happens seldom, even though life would be much simpler if situations like that were the rule rather than the exception.

Only One Choice?

Many conservative religious thinkers suggest that there is one and only one right choice in any circumstance. Major United States corporations hitchhike on that idea in their advertising. "The right choice" is AT&T, according to their ads. Both groups suggest that we are free to do what is right *or* to err, but that we had better follow the straight and narrow path.

Such thinking is comforting, and in a few issues it may be essential. A case can be made that in our society we have strayed too far from basic values and that a return to right versus wrong thinking can help us to deal with the realities of life and to reduce our schizophrenic ways.

Questions we should ask about any action ought to include: Is what I am about to do or say right or wrong? Is there truly a right choice? A wrong choice? When the answers are clear, we are still free to act as we wish, but good sense, morality, and sound judgment dictate that we should follow the path we see as right.

Such thinking is fine as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough in helping us to contend with most of the mundane and significant issues we face. In most circumstances there are dozens of good, bad, or indifferent choices we might make.

An Example of Multiple Choices

Suppose that you (now, or at some other point in your life) have a sixteen-year-old daughter we will call Maura who asks your permission to attend a party on Friday night at her friend's house. What are some choices you might make?

Tell her yes, since you know and trust her and her friend. Tell her yes on a conditional basis—if she has her chores and homework done. Tell her yes and remind her of the time she will have to be home. Ask questions about those who will be in attendance, and deny her permission because one of the people who will be there has a questionable reputation. Ask the same questions, but encourage her to attend because you know that Maura will help her friend maintain the kind of atmosphere that should prevail at the party. Tell her to ask your spouse. Suggest she check with you later since you are busy at present. Tell her no because you believe that sixteen-year-olds should not be partying with members of the opposite sex. Tell

her no because there is something else she ought to be doing that evening. Hug her and tell her you hope she will have a wonderful time.

Clearly there are parents who would make any of the choices listed above and believe they have made suitable responses. So which choice is absolutely right? Absolutely wrong?

The Danger of Absolutes

A case can be made that none of these choices is absolutely right or wrong. In fact each choice might be rationalized as a good one. And unforeseen consequences might result from any of the above choices that might make it seem in retrospect to be right or wrong.

If you conclude that *some* choices are absolutely right or wrong, it does not follow that *all* choices are absolutely right or wrong. If you conclude that *some* choices are relatively right or wrong, it does not follow that *all* choices are relatively right or wrong.

In our society we have a passion to reduce matters to dichotomies: either/or, black/white, with/against, now/never, right/wrong. We may believe we are doing ourselves and others a favor to carve up all the realities into pairs of alternatives, but it is often unwise. If you think in right/wrong, either/or terms, you have only to come up with two possible actions and you are ready to choose—often to your own detriment and to the detriment of your relationships.

Responding to Others

A friend suggests a movie. If you think in either/or terms, you consider whether or not the choice seems convenient or interesting, and you say your yes or no. Right? Probably not.

How often do you say the simple word yes or no in such a circumstance? If the truth be known, seldom. More often than not you use several words to convey your conclusion. Here are some possible ways you might say yes, no, or maybe to the movie suggestion:

I'd love to. OK. I don't have anything better to do. All right. If you really want to. Glad you asked. Why not? Great! I've been wanting to see that flick—and with you—that'd be super. There are a hundred things I'd rather do, but OK.

Nope. Can't make it. Shucks, I just made another commitment, but I'd rather go with you. I'm stacked up tonight, but what about next week? You've got to be kidding. Buzz off!

We'll see. I'll call you later. Maybe. I hope I can. If nothing else turns up I'll call you.

Even when you have a choice that is apparently simple to make, it becomes complex because of the numerous ways in which you can make it. And clearly, the way you convey your choice may actually be more important than the choice you make.

Imagine how your friend would feel at hearing: "There are a hundred things I'd rather do, but OK." "You've got to be kidding." Or, "If nothing else turns up I'll give you a call." By contrast, imagine the pleasure he or she would feel if you said: "I'd love to." "Shucks, I just made another commitment, but I'd rather go with you." "I'm stacked up tonight, but what about next week?" Or, "If I can get my work done in time I'd be delighted."

You respond to a great many situations with what computer programers call branching. If Maura asks about attending the party or your friend asks you to the movies you probably ask a brief series of questions before you decide on an answer. (Read down the columns)

"Who will be there?"	*"Which movie?"*
"Will her parents be around?"	*"What's that one about?"*
"What kinds of activities are planned?"	*"What is its rating?"*
"Which boys will be there?"	*"Is it violent?"*

At each point along the way, the questions you ask relate to your value system, and the answers you receive lead you to your next inquiry and shape your eventual response. Time after time you follow one branch rather than another. What you learn leads you to choose the next branch and the next, and eventually you are ready to decide.

Life is like that. You do not dash into the pool area with blinders on, run the length of the diving board, and launch out into space—without at least checking if there is water in the pool or if someone is swimming under the board toward you. In interaction with others, too, you collect information on a serial basis, branching and branching, until you are ready to make your decision.

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Keep right versus wrong thinking in perspective. Where it applies, use it to help you make your best decisions. But, do not try to reduce every large or small choice to either/or terms.

When There are No Good Decisions

In some cases there are no good decisions. A teen-ager we know followed her parents dictates and cut ties with a friend who was always in trouble—drugs, petty thievery, and truancy. Not long afterward the boy committed suicide. In retrospect all of his actions appeared to be calls for help. After a great deal of time spent in soul-searching and counseling, the teen-ager has finally come to accept the idea that, beyond what she did—encourage the boy to seek treatment and mention her concern to a counselor whom the boy refused to see—there were no really good choices for her to make. Had the boy survived he might have led the girl to her destruction.

Choosing the Road

In most situations you face, you could make one of a variety of decisions and any of them might be "right." The other just becomes a road not taken, to use Robert Frost's phrase.

Years ago I taught in a U. S. Army Dependents School in Japan. I had been warned against going through a particular park in Tokyo—an anti-American cell was rumored to be centered there. I had also heard that one of the most authentic and least expensive department stores in the city was located nearby. One Sunday I yielded to temptation and went to the department store, alone. Hands full of purchases, I began my return through the park toward the subway station. A young man caught up to me. When I walked faster he walked faster, when I slowed he slowed. Finally he screwed up his courage and announced that he had several friends in the park and they would like me to come and talk English with them.

I joined the group and we got together once a week for all the time remaining to me in Japan. I recently went back and enjoyed the company of four of the fellows I met as a result of that momentary choice. I was treated like royalty by them and their families. I would never have known what I missed if I had not made that first choice. It could have been a poor decision, but it was not. Life is like that.

How We Make Our Choice is Important

We make our best guesses, but the rightness or wrongness of many of our decisions and choices can be determined only by the outcomes. On the CREST helps us avoid the temptation to see choices as simple either/or matters. And it suggests that we need to be aware that *how* we make our choices is every bit as important as which choices we make.

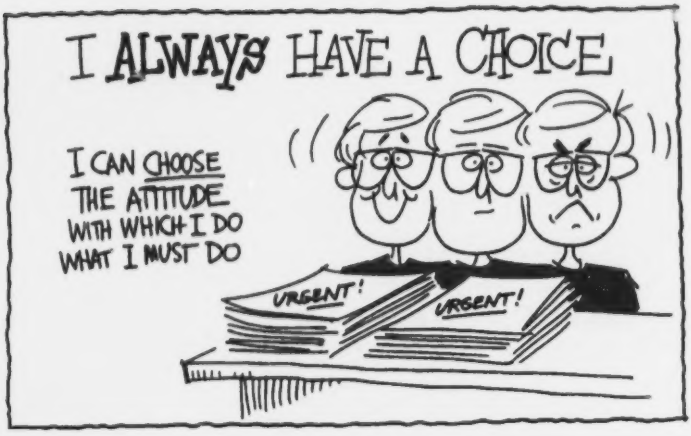
Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues. Next, or in place of the above suggestion, jot down notes about a recent interaction that did not turn out as well as you had hoped with someone you care about. Try to recapture the other person's and your own exact words and the tones of voice used as much as possible and write about them. Discuss the choices you made that moved matters along the path you took; then discuss other choices you might have made.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

6

It's *Your* Choice



You cannot make anyone else's choices—only your own. In a problem relationship, you may alter the game by initiating more positively and making more cooperative responses. You influence the direction of the relationship through your choices.

On the CREST places the stress on *your* choices. The fact of the matter is that you only have control over *your* behaviors, *your* words, *your* actions—and to some extent over your thoughts and feelings (more on that later). You cannot make anyone else's choices, you can only make your own. Clearly others' choices affect you, and you may wish that they would change, but the only choices you can really change are your own.

You may be thinking, "That's not fair. It's the other person's behaviors that are the problem. What I want is a system that will help me convince dad (mom, my spouse, junior, my friend, whomever) to change—not one that produces changes in me."

An Analogy to Tennis

A beginning tennis analogy may help us sort this out. Suppose you are skilled in tennis and a friend of yours asks you to teach him the game. He has watched enough tennis on TV to know the basic rules, so your responsibility is to help him in the playing process.

You could stand across the net from him, use your toughest serve, and smash every ball as hard as you are able, playing consistently at the top of your game. If you do that, your partner is likely to spend much of the time chasing the balls he has missed and hitting them where you have to chase them. The outcome will probably be discouragement for your partner and a quick end to his tennis efforts—at least involving you. To avoid this outcome you could choose to play with him in a cooperative way. You serve the ball gently and place it so he can hit it. You encourage him when he makes a near-successful shot, and you give him pointers along the way.

In making interactive choices with another person, especially one with whom you want a better relationship, you have approximately half of the power to turn what may be a competitive, hard-smashing "game" into a more cooperative interaction. If "the ball" comes straight to you in a line drive, your reflexes may tell you to smash it right back or to feel bad if you cannot. But interpersonal choice-making has a big advantage over tennis. You can "freeze action"—you can think for a moment—and "the ball" hangs there in place for brief period of time, until you make your move. If you want to improve the relationship it may be time to send back a soft lob that says: "Let's change the way we are playing this interaction game; let's play it cooperatively."

Initiating Dialogue

You have even more control when you take the opportunity to "serve the ball"—when you *initiate* dialogue. When you choose to initiate you can send the kind of choice that is likely to help move the relationship in a more positive direction.

I have lost track about whom the story was told, but some famous person was in a big city for a series of meetings over a period of several weeks. Each day as he walked to the meeting site with a colleague, he stopped at a news stand to buy a daily paper. Each day he greeted the vendor cheerily and the news vendor responded gruffly. Their exchanges went something like this:

"Good morning. Nice day today."

Vendor: "There's nothing good about it."

"Hello, how are you today?"

Vendor: "What's it to you? You don't care."

"Hi there, looks like the weather is clearing."

Vendor: "Humph. The weather stinks."

Regardless of the response of the vendor, our man smiled, waved, and went on his way. After many days his incredulous colleague said, "Day in and day out you go on being friendly to that fellow. How can you keep on doing that when he never says anything positive to you?"

"It's simple," he said, "I've decided that I'm not going to let him choose my behavior."

"Playing the Game" Cooperatively

The celebrity in our anecdote "played the game" in a cooperative way regardless of the style of play of the news vendor. In terms of the tennis analogy, he sent soft lobs as he initiated dialogue, and instead of chasing the vendor's hard smash and serving back a vicious stroke or lofting the ball over the fence in anger, he sent another soft lob and went on his way, contented.

If you are like most people much of the time, you adapt your style of "play" to your companion of the moment. That means you let the other person pick the style of your choices for you. He or she makes positive statements; you make positive statements. He or she sends barbs; you send barbs. It does not have to be that way. *You* get to make *your* choices.

It is not easy to change patterns that have become habits, and it is not easy after a lifetime of tit for tat responses to send back soft lobs when you are getting nothing but slams. But at least now and then you could take a cue from Proverbs 15:1: "A soft answer turns away wrath."

Speaking of soft answers, when someone was raising his or her voice, did you ever respond in a near-whisper? It does not always work—nor will a soft answer *always* turn away wrath—but it accomplishes its objective often enough that you might give it a try now and then. A soft response may be exactly what you need to use if you want to play cooperatively.

Quiet Assertiveness

Perhaps you are thinking at this point, "I don't need to answer others more softly. I talk too softly as it is and I get trampled all the time. I need some help in standing up for myself. I ought to 'play the game' harder and tougher."

In a later chapter we will turn our attention to the topic of assertiveness and deal with that issue directly. For now, let us point out that many quiet, firm responses *are* assertive. One of the most assertive *and* most positive choices involves initiating in a way that allows you to direct the dialogue in a positive channel, e.g., "Why Maude, it's good to see you. That color really becomes you." Falling into a trap that another sets for you is less assertive *and* less positive.

The soft lobs you send act as deposits in the joint account between you and the other person. You may feel justified, even obligated, to "yank out funds" when the other person does, but nowhere is it written that you must do so—nowhere in *On the CREST*, anyway. And if the account is ever to grow, someone *must* stop making withdrawals in the account first, and someone must start making deposits first. How does the song go? "Let it begin with me."

Make Your Own Choices

On the CREST suggests that you can only control your own choices. Much as you might like it if others changed their behaviors, there is relatively little you can do about that—directly. But you can choose how you play the game, you can put energy and value into your accounts, you can stir up a too-placid relationship, and you can avoid agitating a relationship that is too stormy for you. You can send up soft lobs and alter the competitive nature of the game, changing it to a more cooperative one. And you can make more effective choices rather than reflecting the choices of the other person, or continuing to follow a pattern of habits that serves you poorly.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues. Next, if you choose, write your observations about someone in your life who plays the interactive game in a way that troubles you. That person may play "hard ball" all the time, or the two of you may seldom engage in anything but soft, non-involving interaction. You can be dissatisfied on either account. Describe your own and the other person's choices. Consider to what extent you let your style of choosing be determined by the choices that person sends to you, and vice versa. Consider what better choices you could make if you "froze action" at times, and then chose. Discuss in what ways you could take control as an initiator and improve the relationship.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

7
Goals

OUR SHORT TERM GOALS MAY BE A PROBLEM
WHAT I WANT MOST IS TO GET ALONG BETTER WITH SIGGY
BUT WHAT I WANT FIRST IS TO GET BACK AT HIM BECAUSE OF YESTERDAY

You have personal and interpersonal goals. Your long range goals are likely to be quite positive. If you take them out and look at them, and then act on them, it may well improve your relationships. You take some risks when you change your choice patterns, but you take other risks if you do not act on your long range goals.

Goals for Yourself and Others

You probably are not aware of it, but you have at least two kinds of long range goals: goals for yourself and goals with others. Getting ahead on your job is an example of a goal for yourself—a personal goal. Getting along well with your friend is an example of a goal with another person—an interpersonal goal. Both kinds of goals are important.

Consider your long range goals for yourself and with others, and in all likelihood you will find that they are broad-based and positive. You do yourself and others a great favor by thinking about your goals and then making choices that help you achieve them.

Hal Ralston's personal goal was immediately clear to him: to accumulate enough wealth so that he might be able to take early retirement and launch one of the business ventures that played at the back of his mind. When he considered three important people in his life, he immediately settled upon his wife, Darla, his teen-aged son, Rick, and the executive vice president of the small company for which he is sales manager, Seth Larkin. In two minutes he jotted down the following long term goals for those relationships:

Person 1. Darla—to keep up the nice, warm relationship we have, or improve it.

Person 2. Rick—to begin changing from a father-son relationship to one that is more and more a relationship between equals.

Person 3. Seth Larkin—to gain a little greater sense of ease. We get along well enough, but I'd like to knock down the wall he puts up between himself and just about everyone else in his world.

Some Questions

Let us break the flow for a moment to ask a few questions: What was your initial reaction to the idea that you have goals in your relationships. Did you think: Wouldn't that lead to a manipulative, "using" kind of interaction? Shouldn't life be more spontaneous, unplanned? Isn't it best for me to take matters as they come, rather than try to achieve purposes through my behavior?

Take a careful look at the goals you have for your relationships with those people who are important to you. In all likelihood your goals are positive and not at all manipulative, and chances are you might be even *more* spontaneous—and not as likely to let your relationships become humdrum—if you kept those goals in view.

The Two-Way Risks

You take a risk if you do *not* figure out what your goals are—if you do *not* make choices to help you achieve them. The risk is that you may be moving the relationship in the opposite direction from where you want it to go.

Take Hal's relationship with his son, Rick, who is seventeen and in the throes of choosing a college and a career. Hal hears in his own reactions to Rick a tendency to treat him as he did when Rick was much younger—suggesting, advising, demanding, criticizing. On

one level he knows Rick's decisions have to be his own, especially with regard to college and career choice. Still, he finds himself following his habit of controlling Rick just as he has for years. When he specified his goal with Rick—movement toward a relationship between equals—he could see that many of his choices were moving the relationship in the opposite direction, creating both dependency and resentment. That led him to consider making choices more often that would encourage Rick in his own process of self-exploration.

Long Term/Short Term Goals

It is often difficult, especially in relationships that are coming apart at the seams, to move toward good, positive, long range goals. Why? It is like missing the forest for the trees. You get so caught up in short term goals that you cannot keep the long range ones in view.

Suppose yesterday a friend of yours was supposed to call and did not. Even though the explanation is totally plausible, when you see your friend, you may read the riot act, use biting humor, or sulk. If your account with your friend is in really good shape your negativism will not help the relationship, but it will not destroy it either. It definitely will not move you toward your goal, let us say, of maintaining a good, close relationship. You can rationalize that your reaction was justified, but you probably cannot say that your anger, biting humor, or sulking *helped* you become closer. That is not likely to happen unless you take the opportunity to talk out what is troubling you, unless you share your honest disappointment.

Acting in negative ways on short term goals, e.g., getting back at someone for a slight, a negative action, or an oversight, may seem justified, but your actions do not move you toward your long range goals.

Acting in positive ways on long term goals may mean taking one kind of risk—that the person involved will try to exploit your softheartedness, for example. But acting in negative ways on short term goals means taking another kind of risk—that the difficulty will escalate and the relationship will suffer. If you do not sulk or scold after your friend disappoints you, you risk the possibility that the behavior will be repeated. If you do sulk or scold you risk the possibility of hurting the relationship even more.

Gains Require Investment

"Great gain toward goals can't be expected from minimal investments" (Nelson, 1977, p. 55). Imagine saying to your friend in these words, or others that are more comfortable for you, "I don't want to badger you or cause you to feel worse about not calling, but I want you to know you're important to me and that I was disappointed that you didn't call." Would you be willing to take the risk involved? Would you be willing to lay on the line something of your feelings about the other person? If not, what kinds of risks *are* you willing to take?

What value does a relationship have unless you are willing to take some risks for it?

Investments and risks are not associated just with responses to negative events. If your goal is really positive with someone, are you willing to take the risks of making what we call major OK choices: giving a hug, sending a thoughtful gift or note, making a really positive comment? If not, what kinds of positive risks do you take?

Long Range Goals are Important

If your long range goals are positive they are worth taking positive action to achieve.

On the CREST and the Choice Awareness system suggest that long range self-goals—and goals with others—are important. It may be easy for you to get bogged down in the everyday, mundane events of life and overlook your need to take action to achieve your long range goals. The act of specifying those goals can encourage movement toward them. The next step is that of making the choices that serve your goals.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues.

Under a the heading, LONG RANGE GOAL, describe in a brief paragraph a long range goal you have for yourself. As an example, your goal may involve your work or some personal achievement.

Now continue your entry under the headings PERSON 1, 2, and 3, and describe your long term goals with those people. Need help? Who are the two or three most important people in your life? Spouse? Child? Friend? Parent? Enter the names of those persons, or use a symbol or code if you prefer. Think for a moment, then in a few words or a sentence or two, write the goal you have with each person.

Next, jot down several CHOICES you believe would help you move toward your goals for each relationship. Specify the words or actions you might use. Think about the five CREST choices as you do this, since that may help you list a wide range of choices. Your entry should contain the following elements:

LONG RANGE GOAL

PERSON 1
GOAL
CHOICES

PERSON 2
GOAL
CHOICES

PERSON 3
GOAL
CHOICES

Example: *In just a few moments, Hal listed his goals and two or more choices he believed would help him with Darla, Rick, and Seth.*

Darla. Hug her more often and let her know how much I appreciate the many little things she does that grease the wheels for me. Say, "Thanks, Darla, for the dozens of little things you do every day that make my life more pleasant and easier."

Rick. I know he's got a lot on the ball when it comes to computers. I have some burning questions that someone at the office could answer, but I'll ask him tonight.

Seth Larkin. Share with him in small ways that might tear down the wall he puts up with others. I know he's health conscious; I'll give him the issue I picked up of ***The Walking Magazine****, and make it a point to bring it up later in our conversation.*

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

Reference

Nelson, R. C. (1977). *Choosing a better way to live*. Lake Park, FL : GuideLines Press.

8
Responsibility and Response-Ability

Responsibility depends on response-ability—having a wide range of behaviors available to meet any contingency. Developing choice-making skills and learning to initiate are two important keys to acting responsibly.

The Development of Responsibility

For a while we went through a period in which do-your-own-thing was the watchword, and people did not think much about responsibility. The pendulum has swung the other way and responsibility has come back into vogue, though people often act less responsibly than they might.

You are responsible for your actions, for the words you say and the things you do. Even if you deny responsibility for the things you do and say, they are your choices. You are even responsible for many of your thoughts and feelings—more about that later.

If you are fortunate enough to have developed a clear and consistent pattern of responsible actions, you probably had three external factors and a very important internal factor going for you.

1. You grew up around people who acted in responsible ways—to a reasonable extent.
2. You received a reasonable amount of nurturance from others.
3. You were encouraged and supported in gradual growth toward responsibility—people did not expect either too much or too little of you.

If any of those factors were lacking and you act responsibly, you still had the most important factor working for you—an internal factor:

4. You *chose* to act responsibly—you developed a pattern of responsible choosing that you use in most circumstances.

If you grew up where some of these factors were absent or where you received double messages from grown-ups around you—you were told to act responsibly, but you did not have effective models for patterning your behavior—it may be somewhat difficult for you to make responsible choices consistently. You may find it even more difficult to act responsibly if you grew up around people who provided an active example of irresponsible behavior—an alcoholic parent, for example, or one who demanded your cooperation in an incestuous relationship or as an aide in criminal activity—as an assistant to a modern Fagin. No matter what your experiences were, though, you are responsible for your choices—at least by the time you are able to read what appears on this page.

Unconscious Motivation

Sigmund Freud attributed much behavior to unconscious motivation; his theories have taken a taken a lot of heat over recent years in large measure because of that idea, but what he said was most helpful in the sequence of human events. Until Freud helped move us away from blaming mental illness on demons and witches we locked people away with no treatment, so they would do no harm to others. Freud's historical contributions to humanity parallel the contributions of Edison and Ford. We should give Freud credit for helping us progress in the treatment of personal difficulties in the

same way we credit Edison and Ford for helping us light our cities and drive through them. But we should not excuse people for irresponsible behavior, decades later, on the basis of one of Freud's primary ideas—that the motivation for much behavior is unconscious, therefore it may be presumed to be uncontrollable—any more than we should expect people to use the same old light bulbs or drive only Model-T or Model-A Fords.

B does not necessarily follow A. If you do something without knowing why you do it—because of some unconscious motivation—that does not mean your action was uncontrollable. Every day people resist urges that seem uncontrollable. Every day people take control of themselves and act nobly in the face of all manner of difficulties.

They choose their actions.

You choose your actions.

Response-Ability

In our society we do little that genuinely promotes the idea that we are responsible for what we say and do. We ought to do more.

I have a vision of schoolchildren, business executives, prisoners—all people—having the opportunity to take periodic refresher courses in Choice Awareness throughout their lives. In these courses they would review the basic structure of the CA system and have two major ideas reinforced. First, that they are responsible. Second, that responsibility depends on response-ability, and response-ability is a product of having a wide variety of choices available to use in almost any circumstance.

If you are like most people you are a creature of habit. You have learned patterns of behaviors that serve you reasonably well and you repeat those behaviors in a variety of circumstances. You have available to you a broad range of behaviors, but you tend to make particular choices in particular situations with particular people.

Somewhere along the line even the future murderer learned some tender, caring behavior—expressed to an animal, a stuffed toy, a younger child, a parent—toward someone or something. Somewhere along the line even the person who will later be immobilized by severe depression felt joy—made choices that resulted in joyful feelings inside. At least until the murder has occurred or the indi-

vidual is in the throes of severe depression, it is possible for either person to learn to use more effective skills in choice-making—to become more responsible either to others or to him/herself or both.

Response-ability is the key to responsibility. You have the *ability* to respond. You are responsible for what you do and say. What you may need is to grow in your ability to respond—to become more response-able—through practicing more effective skills in a broader range of circumstances.

Applying the Concept

Suppose for a moment your relationship with your father is not a very good one. You tend to snap at one another if you are together for very long, so you avoid contact with one another. If the usual pattern prevails, as the younger person and the object of many of Dad's previous directives, when you enter Dad's space you habitually wait for him to say something, he does, it is more often than not negative—since we are supposing that the relationship between you is less than positive—and you growl back at him or feel miserable inside yourself.

Suppose by contrast you have strong, positive relationships with your mother, a close friend, and a member of the opposite sex. In your contacts with those individuals you smile, you ask about their health, you compliment them, you touch them caringly, you do kind and thoughtful things for them, and in general you respond to them and initiate with them in positive ways.

Your long range goal with Dad is probably as positive as it is with those other people. For example, you may want a caring and respectful relationship. What you need to do in your relationship with Dad is make more caring, respectful, and responsible choices. You may rationalize that the problems between you result from irresponsible behavior on *his* part; in all likelihood he sees the difficulty in the same way—but you are "the heavy." You each feel the hurts from yesterday, the day before, and on into the past, and you each act on your short-range, rather than your long-range, goals.

Your basic choice is easy to state, though it may be difficult to achieve: you can either maintain the cycle of hurtfulness or become more powerful and responsible—more response-able—in your interactions with your Dad. The key may be for you to become more of an initiator with your father, using some of the interactive skills you display with your friends.

If your effort is to succeed you will need to learn to ignore Dad's tendency to snap at you, reasoning that "He's like that with everyone," or take some responsibility for having set up the pattern if he is *not* like that with everyone.

The First Move

If you decide that you have to continue to be the responder in the relationship, you may argue internally that, since Dad is the initiator, it is up to him to make the first move. If you take that stance, that is your choice—like it or not—and not much improvement is likely to occur in your relationship until your father decides to take action. And, just maybe, Dad will not be able break through his pattern of choices unless you help him do so. Dad may need you to make the first move if he is to become more response-able and responsible with you.

Plug in a different relationship that is not going well for you, and the same ideas apply. To change a relationship, change your pattern of choices, use your response-ability.

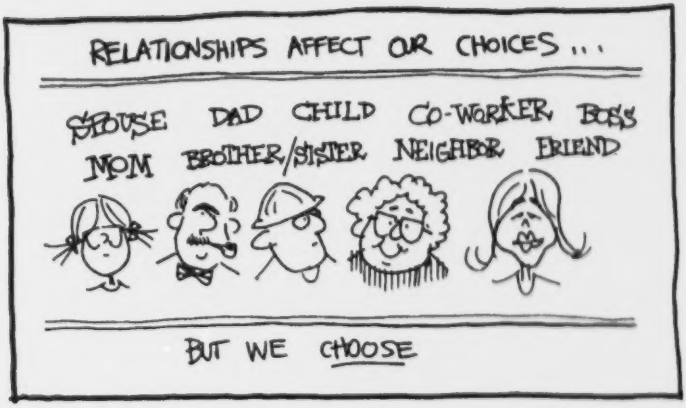
Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues.

Next, or in place of the above suggestion, jot down notes about one of your relationships in which you habitually behave in a rather narrow way, and another in which you allow yourself a broader range of behaviors. Consider carefully what the other person's responses would likely be if you *gradually* broadened your range of behaviors in the first relationship so that they became more like those in the second relationship. Discuss the extent to which you believe the change in your choices would benefit the relationship.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

9
Responding—Mirroring—Initiating



For the most part we act on habit in response to what others send our way, or we mirror the behaviors of those around us. Instead, we need to *initiate* in ways that are likely to move us toward our goals.

Initiating

Initiation is often the key to acting responsibly. When we wait for something to react to, we risk the likelihood that we will see and hear the same kinds of choices that have characterized the relationship in the past, and we are likely to react in the same old way. If we want a relationship to improve we need to take action to make that happen; we need to initiate. Someone wrote on a graffiti board after a Human Relations Workshop, "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you always got." The corollary to that, of course, is: "If you don't want what happened in the past to happen time and again, make a change in what you do."

Mirroring

Sometimes the problem is that we cease being ourselves when we are around other individuals. We behave in ways that mirror the other person. That may be appropriate at times; often it is not.

I would like to use a personal relationship to make that point specific.

I have a very serious, very bright colleague with whom I have worked over a span of many years. Especially at first, as the junior member of the pair, I always went to Professor X's office when we needed to get together. I blamed him for the dullness of the relationship—because of his thoroughly serious demeanor—and eventually I came to dread our contacts.

At one point after a Purdue University graduate student, John Bloom, and I had developed many of the concepts of Choice Awareness (Nelson & Bloom, 1975), I needed to meet with Professor X. As I thought about the contact to come it occurred to me that, just possibly, I had some responsibility for the unpleasant feelings I had whenever I crossed his office threshold.

As the day approached, I prepared myself for our meeting. When the time came, I started off by mentioning something amusing I had heard, and I followed that up by inquiring about his wife. To my joy and delight he chuckled at the story and he smiled as he talked about his mate of many years. Immediately the burden I had felt was lifted, and we subsequently had a businesslike, but thoroughly pleasant discussion.

When I returned to my office I thought long and hard about that contact. I finally decided that the person I did not like in that relationship was *me*! I had been acting like a mirror to Professor X's seriousness, and blaming *him* for that. When I broadened the range of behaviors I was using in my interaction with him he responded very positively. Since then I have had many opportunities to be with Professor X, and I always find them pleasant. In fact, I seek them out because they validate the notion that I can change a relationship if I change my behaviors.

Whose Choices Do You Mirror?

With whom do *you* mirror choices—in ways you do not like? Think about your closest relationships as well as those that are more distant. Consider especially those relationships in which you are in a subordinate position. If you find that you hold up the other person's behavior as a model for yourself, it may be time to modify your pattern of choices.

The Choice Awareness system makes it clear that responsibility depends on having a wide range of behaviors available to you—it depends on response-ability. You can improve many of your most difficult relationships if you incorporate in them the skills that work well with others with whom you have successful relationships. You do not need a whole new system of skills to create a better life for yourself. Instead, you need the courage to broaden the use of the skills you have to achieve your goals for your relationships.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues.

Next, if you choose, write your observations about the extent to which you mirror the behaviors of those with whom you are in a subordinate relationship, when you are in their presence. Discuss initiations you might make that might modify those relationships advantageously—for each of you.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

Reference

Nelson, R.C. and Bloom, J.W. (1975). *Choice awareness: An innovative guidance process*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

10
Choosing Your Feelings

We are complex creatures. In situations that generate strong feelings we often have many feelings. We serve our goals best if we choose to act more often on our positive than on our negative feelings.

Feelings and Choices

When we defined the word *choice* we indicated that some of our thoughts and feelings are choices. It is not so much that we choose which feelings we have as that we choose the feelings on which we will act.

You are a complex creature. In nearly any circumstance in which you must choose you have a great number of options open to you—if only in how you will express your choices. In the same way, you have a variety of feelings open to you in many of the circumstances you face. You choose which feelings you express and how you express them.

An Illustration

An illustration may serve here. It is some time in the future and you have recently taken a new position. You are coming to enjoy your co-workers and are beginning to feel comfortable with your assignment. You are surprised when your immediate superior asks you to take on a major new responsibility in an area that does not

really fit your interests. You know that many of your colleagues have been passed-over, and that some of them have much more interest in the assignment than you. What are all the feelings you might have in such a circumstance?

On one level you may feel complimented, excited, pleased, even thrilled. On another level you may feel uncertain, hesitant, trapped, negative, uninterested. On a third level—relating to co-workers—you may feel concerned for those who have been by-passed, and insecure about the effect your move will have on your relationships. On a fourth level—if you do not have confidence in yourself—you may feel worried, scared, concerned for yourself.

As your supervisor stands before you, in a split second you weigh many or all of these feelings and then you make an initial response. You have numerous options for expressing whatever feeling you choose to act upon. Let us say you decide to check "uncertain" out of all the multiple-choice-type options available. You can express that option in several ways:

I'm not sure that assignment fits me.

Please tell me more about the assignment.

Whoa. Are you sure you have the right person in mind?

Why me for an assignment like that?

Uh huh. (as encouragement for your supervisor to say more)

Can we schedule an appointment to talk about this? You've really surprised me.

We-l-l-l.

If you decide to check the "negative" option, the "worried" option, the "excited" option, or any other, there are several ways in which you can express each of those choices as well.

Either-Or Thinking

More than likely, if you are accustomed to thinking in either-or, yes-no, right-wrong terms, you tend to sort out your feelings superficially. You skim off the top one or two of your strongest feelings, you ignore many of your other feelings, you make a selection, and you react. It takes only a split second to dig a little deeper, consider the variety of your feelings, choose one that may serve your long range goals, and act on it in a way that might be more suitable for you.

In some interpersonal situations that bring out strong feelings—for example, if you are taken to task publicly for an error you made—the feeling that seems strongest is anger, and anger needs to be expressed at times. Often, though, the feeling that came before the anger—hurt or disappointment, perhaps—is more relevant. Somehow in our society we have come to accept the expression of anger more readily than many other softer, gentler, feelings.

It takes trust to say, quietly, inviting discussion: "I felt bad when you yelled at me yesterday—right there in front of those people." It reduces trust if you say: "Don't you yell at me in front of anyone else ever again!" If the relationship is important to you and you want to maintain or improve it, expressing the feeling that came before anger—feeling hurt in this instance—then talking further, is likely to contribute to that objective.

You can probably predict when you will encounter the person—spouse, friend, child, other—with whom you had a problem yesterday. You can prepare yourself to make the first move and act on your long range goal, based on one of your more positive feelings. You do not *just* feel angry or disappointed at the slight. Beneath the surface you may feel respect, liking, or loving. You do not *just* feel the need for revenge or retribution. You may also feel the need for reconciliation.

Choosing More Effectively

You choose from among your feelings in a great many of the circumstances of life. You can make your choices serve your goals. And those times when you have strong feelings offer you important opportunities for serving your goals.

Once I came home from several days at a conference at the time I had projected—approximately 5:30 P.M. I expected my wife, Betty, to arrive about a half hour later. I unpacked and busied myself with preparations for dinner and as 6:00 approached I felt anticipation, eagerness, excitement, and love. A half hour passed and my feelings included disappointment, annoyance, and concern. More time passed and I found an article I wanted to read; for a while I was only dimly aware of the mix of feelings—basically I felt interested in and absorbed in what I was reading. Another half hour and I felt both angry and fearful—something terrible could have happened, but if fear had been my only feeling I probably would have begun calling the hospitals or the police. When Betty drove up well after seven

o'clock, put the car in the garage, and came to the front door smiling, the most appropriate feeling for me to have, it seems to me *now*, was one of relief. At the time, how did I spell relief?

A-N-G-E-R.

The truth of the matter is that I had available to me all of the feelings I had had for over two hours. I could have expressed relief or love, or shared my anticipation or disappointment in a variety of ways.

A couple of weeks later, a person I had not met did not show up for the appointment he had scheduled with me. After a few minutes of finger-drumming I began to feel that I had been given a very special gift—an hour I did not expect to have to work on something I needed to do. I did not feel anger at all. Actually, I felt pleased—and that proved to me that my anger two weeks before was not something I *had* to express.

Expressing a Positive and a Negative

At the very least, if you face a circumstance like the one I faced with Betty, you can find a way to express a positive feeling along with a negative one. "I'm really relieved that you're here safe and sound, but I'm annoyed that you didn't call me when you knew you were going to be so late." That statement may confuse the other person momentarily, but when you have strong negative feelings to share with someone you care about, it may be your best option.

You are not a simple creature. While it may feel to you as if you have one overriding emotion when something happens, more often than not you have a mixture of feelings churning inside you. The Choice Awareness system encourages you to take time to sort out the variety of feelings you have, to consider your goals, and to take action that serves you well. In many of the situations you face, an extra second's thought may be all you need to make better choices.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues.

Next, if you choose, search back over recent days and select a circumstance in which you had strong feelings. Describe the situation, indicating what you and others did and said, and what feeling

you acted on first. Take some time to think carefully about the people, the circumstances, the words spoken, and the actions, and jot down all the feelings that might have been present in you, leading up to the event and during it. Tell what you might have said or done, and what might have resulted, if you had acted on one of the most constructive feelings you had available to you.

An example may help. Paul, a high school junior, was in a Personal Living class where he was given a similar assignment. Here's what he wrote:

A. *I was just cut from his basketball team to make room for a transfer student after Jim K and his family moved into the school district. Coach took a lot of time with me and tried to smooth over the situation. But I'd looked forward to being on the team and had worked toward that for so long that I just stood there, quiet and sullen. I hardly looked at him, even when he said, "You have so much character, Paul, I know you'll make the best of this."*

B. *The feelings in me are all negative. I'm disappointed and angry. I feel lost. I'm frustrated, even humiliated.*

   What positive feelings can I possibly have? Those don't come to mind very easily.

   Loyalty to the team—the new player just might be the answer to our prayers—we're almost good, maybe now we'll be good. Affection for the guys and Coach—I haven't just been dumped by the fellows like I thought I might, they showed a lot of concern for me—and Coach tried to help me with my frustration. Strangely enough, I feel some relief. I need some time to get my grades up if I'm going to get in the university I'm aiming for.

   I guess if I hadn't turned him off, Coach might have suggested I help with the intramural basketball program, and for sure it would have made it easier on him if I said I could use a few extra hours of study each week. Maybe I'd understand my advanced math better and that might help in other subjects, too.

C. *It's probably not too late. I think I'll go talk to Coach after practice and at least tell him I appreciated him taking so much time with me, and that I can use the study time—it just took me awhile to figure that out. I'll also ask him if he thinks I could help on the intramural program.*

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

11
Choosing Your Feelings About Yourself

WE CHOOSE HOW WE FEEL ABOUT OURSELVES & OTHERS
YOU KNOW SIGGY, YOU'RE RIGHT. I CAN CHOOSE TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT MYSELF
GOOD GOING, JANE!

Positive self-feelings start with an appreciation of things we can do. We need to build upon our strengths; our weaknesses provide no foundation for growth.

Two of the most important things you can do for yourself are to assess yourself realistically and appreciate your strengths.

An Activity

Stop right now, open your journal, write the date, this page number, and the title: THINGS I CAN DO. In the next few minutes, list a number of the simplest things you can do. Begin with the word BREATHE, since that will clarify that your list may include some of the most basic activities of humankind. As you list each item, think about it—"Yes, I can breathe," and savor it—"I enjoy breathing, I'm thankful that I'm able to breathe deeply and easily." Also include in your list a few complex things you can do like DRIVE A CAR, if that is within your range of activities. Begin your list now, and over the next few days add more items to your list, taking time to savor the additions you make. Spend some time thinking about the meaning for you of being able to do the things you can do—whether you do them really well or not. Go to it.

If you need help, read the next paragraph.

Alicia's first few items were the following: Breathe. Walk. Do aerobics. Smile. Make friends with others. Cook a few simple things well. Make a mean souffle'. Talk. Listen. Drive a car. Type. Those first eleven items came to her in seconds. Before she paused for the first time to savor her growing list of strengths, she struggled briefly to find a twelfth item. After a moment she added: Think. When she reflected on the meaning of the things she could do she realized that she had a lot more going for her than she let herself believe.

Perhaps you have breezed right past this journal suggestion. Once more we encourage you to build your own list of THINGS I CAN DO—now.

What Would You Trade?

Most of us spend too much time berating ourselves for the gains we have not achieved or for not being as attractive as we wish we were, for example. What items on your list of basics would you trade if you could achieve some elusive goal—a promotion, being better looking, whatever? Probably very few.

Alicia reviewed her list and came to the conclusion that she might be willing to give up being able to make a great souffle' if she could somehow, painlessly, trade that for a college degree. But with the possible exception of typing she decided that she would not trade any of the other things she could do either for the process of gaining the degree (which, she was sure, would be painful), or for the outcome handed to her on a silver platter. The experience reinforced her sense of herself as a worthy person who is able to do most of the things she values.

Appreciate Yourself

You have a right to appreciate yourself as you are. In fact, it is essential that you choose to feel good about yourself—day in and day out, preferably minute by minute—as you live your life. You can choose to appreciate yourself just because you are you, since, as the saying goes, "God don't make no junk." At another level you can choose to appreciate the miracle you represent because of the things you are able to do—speak, drive a car, follow a recipe, recall a brilliant sunset, create a friendship. . . .

Why are we human beings so hesitant to appreciate and enjoy our capabilities? There are probably two major reasons: first, we are born incapable and we develop a habit of comparing ourselves to those who are more capable than we are; and second, we learn to value what we cannot achieve, and discount what we can.

We do not credit ourselves with the tremendous gains we have made from the time we were helpless infants, and we value what we cannot achieve. Along the line, most of us, particularly those who master the skills and goals set before us, take on a value that involves achievement—let us call it the next-step-up-the-ladder mentality. Instead of savoring being successful fifth graders we point to the next step on the ladder. Instead of relishing our accomplishment as high school students we give real value to the post-high-school step on the ladder ahead of us.

Reaching upward may be potentially good, bad, or neutral. For those who can achieve the next level, striving presents opportunities for advancement, and along with it, financial rewards and professional satisfaction. For those who cannot achieve the next level, striving often results in discouragement for the individual and pain for family members, friends, and others. At the same time, reaching upward, even for those who are capable, often means hard work, severe time demands, and challenges—each of which may lead to lower levels of satisfaction.

You may be among those who overlook today as you cast your eyes continually toward yesterday or tomorrow. You may spend a great deal of time regretting lost opportunities or laying your plans for your next move. If so, you may not be using your energy to live each day to the fullest and you may not gain as much as you could from what you are doing. The best preparation for taking the next step up the ladder, *and* the best way to enjoy where you are at the same time, involve living the day fully and gaining from what you are doing.

Focus on Strengths

Choosing to have positive feelings about yourself requires that you focus on things you can do—your strengths. What about things you cannot do—your weaknesses? Should you ignore them?

Just as you should be realistic about your strengths, it is important for you to be realistic about your weaknesses. Some weaknesses you must accept. Some you can compensate for. Some you can

overcome. If you have a profession or a task that requires much organizational ability, and you have not developed that skill, you either need to overcome that deficit or find some way to compensate for it. If you are a one hundred ten pound female you probably need to accept that you will never play in the Chicago Bears' offensive front line—but then, I won't either.

What is important is that you *not* focus on your weaknesses and let your strengths ebb away for lack of appreciation or use; instead, choose to savor and build on your strengths—they are a foundation for growth.

A Positive Self-View

You have an overall sense of your own worth—that is your self-concept. If you see yourself in positive terms you can say such things as: I'm a good person, I'm bright, I'm friendly, people like me, I'm worth knowing, I make good decisions. . . If you can say such things you have a positive self-concept. The challenge is to maintain it.

If your view of yourself is not very positive, or if it is downright negative, you have a different challenge. Instead of focusing initially on changing your overall sense of yourself, focus on things you do. Complete a task well and tell yourself you did it well. Smile at another person and let yourself know you are pleased that you reached out to him. Listen to a friend and acknowledge to yourself that you have helped her "let off steam." You can build your positive feelings about yourself by focusing on the skills you have and the things you do that entitle you to have a positive self-concept.

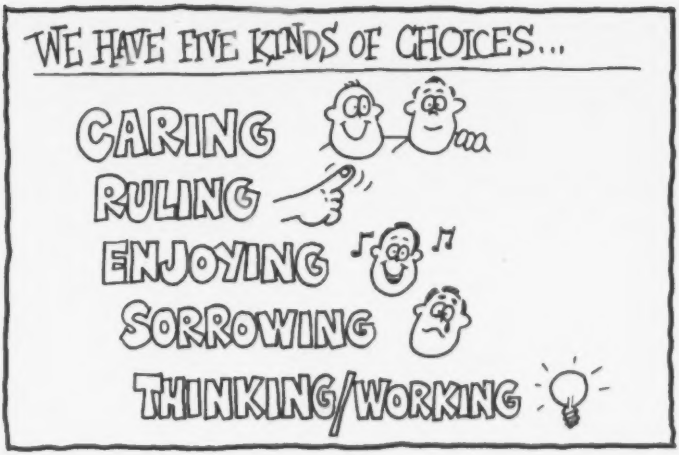
Alicia focused on her capabilities and found that she was gaining a more positive feeling about herself. When she reflected on her self-concept she realized that she often berated herself because she never completed her undergraduate education. "I don't have to keep doing that," she told herself. "After all I have my health, I have a career I enjoy as a credit union teller, and I can do most of the everyday things I really value." It pleased her when one of her co-workers said to her, "I don't know what's come over you lately, but whatever it is I wish it'd rub off on me."

The feelings you have about yourself are among your most important choices. The Choice Awareness system suggests that you need to focus upon your skills and capabilities rather than upon your deficiencies. The ON-THE-CREST approach to better living suggests that you: *keep expanding and savoring your list of* THINGS I CAN DO, and *choose to feel positive about yourself.*

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Look over the list of THINGS I CAN DO you have begun in your journal. Spend some time *reflecting* on your list and its meaning for you. You may then wish to use the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues to extend your entry. Be sure to date your entry and note this page number.

Introducing the CREST System



Expanding CREST Choices

12
Caring Choices: Caring for Others

We all need to be skilled in making caring choices for others—beyond the expectations we encounter because of sex, age, or role. Caring involves learned behaviors; if we have not learned well to demonstrate caring, we can still develop that skill.

Here we take a deeper look at CREST choices—so that you can implement them more effectively in your life. We begin with caring—for others.

"How are you today?"

"I'm glad to see you looking better."

"I'll grab one end of this and give you a hand."

"How can I help?"

"I can see you're really upset right now."

"Oh, you poor thing, what happened?"

Getting someone a glass of water or a cup of coffee.

Pitching in and helping with a task.

Sending a get-well or sympathy card.

Spending time or contributing goods or dollars to help others.

When you make a caring choice such as one of the above you are attempting to meet a need of another person through some kind of helpful action or interaction. As the examples suggest, you can make caring choices with or without words.

OK and OD Choices

Most caring choices you make are seen as OK unless you attempt to meet a need that is not there, unless your choice does not seem right for your relationship with the person, or unless you make your choice in a way that is overdone—OD. In most circumstances the examples above would be OK, with the likely exception of "Oh, you poor thing, what happened?" An even clearer example of an OD choice would be saying, "There, there, you poor little thing," to almost any person. Even small children appreciate being responded to in a way that shows greater respect.

All people in the course of their lives experience disappointments, encounter frustrations, and meet situations which result in negative feelings. If you make caring responses at such times you add to your accounts with others and you can feel good about yourself.

Your Pattern of Caring

Where do you fall on the continuum of effectiveness-to-ineffectiveness in making caring choices with others? When you encounter a friend who is upset or grieving, if you have learned how to respond to others' needs well, you are able to find a few appropriate words to say and you sense whether or not it is all right for you to touch the other person. If you are adequate in responding to others' needs you respond suitably at least some of the time. On the other hand, when you encounter an upset or grieving person, if you are among those who are inadequate in responding to others' needs, you may cross the street because you cannot think of anything to say; you may stumble badly and say what you see later as the wrong thing; or you may realize after you have seen the person that you neglected to address the problem in any way, and become concerned that you now are seen by the other person as insensitive.

Responding effectively to people in need involves learned behaviors. You may or may not have had good models for making caring choices. You may have been socialized to "be strong," to be independent, and never to acknowledge your needs—some females

and many males have been raised in such ways—and therefore you may not have had much experience in receiving or giving care. You may use a number of reasons to explain any inadequacy you feel in making (and receiving) caring choices, but if it will contribute to your relationships—and it would do so in a great many instances—you can expand your caring skills.

The Keys to Change

Let us say you see yourself as ineffective in showing care to others, you agree that you have one or more than one relationship you believe would benefit if you made more caring choices, but you feel inadequate in that realm. What are the keys to changing your patterns of choices?

Be alert to others' needs. If you are like most people you sometimes get so caught up in the tasks of the day that when a person stops by you give a quick nod or greeting to him or her and return to your labors. Certainly that can be excused a great deal of the time, but not always—especially if you have the goal of becoming a more caring person. Your relationships would benefit if you took a moment to review what you know about that person and see if there is something you two might talk about.

The positive side of the ledger is important. Acknowledging the person's birthday, musing over a pleasant get-together, or conveying a greeting from a mutual acquaintance are among a great variety of positive things you might do. You can do each of those things in a few seconds, but in that brief time what you do or say may well contribute significantly to the relationship. Alertness to negative matters is also important. Illness, a family crisis, even the person's favorite team losing a crucial game, can serve as opportunities to make caring choices and bring the two of you closer together.

Chris shows up at your door. Think for a moment what has been going on in Chris's life that may be a relevant point for you to raise. If you recall that Chris's mother is seriously ill, that should help you decide one thing you might mention. If Chris has encountered a recent triumph or disaster, use that as your cue.

Give yourself permission to respond. Another key in changing your pattern of choices, and a most crucial one, is to give yourself permission and encouragement to meet at least some of the needs of others. When you know another person has had some kind of difficulty, or when you encounter others who are evidently in need, your self-talk

could well include permission and encouragement to respond in some way—rather than waiting for the other person to bring up the issue. If the way in which you respond is halting or inadequate it is probably better than no response at all. You can watch for cues, when appropriate you can tell yourself that Chris has a need, and you can give yourself permission to be a caring human being and respond to that need.

Acknowledge the other person's need. Find some way, halting or otherwise, to tell the other person you are aware of the problem he or she is facing. A statement like, "Sorry your team lost the big game," can help with a relatively minor concern. On the other hand, if it is a matter of grief, words often seem inadequate. A hand on the person's shoulder or a pat on the person's back may speak volumes. Telling what is going on inside you may be helpful. For example, you might comment, "I wish I knew what to say." Or, "I'd like to help. If there's a way I can, please let me know."

Take action if there is something you can do. Send a card. Make an offer of some kind of assistance. See if the person wants to be distracted—but it is not a good idea to plunge into a distracting action before you check it out.

Perhaps in the situation with Chris you can think of a specific action you might take. "I know you don't have time to cook a lot, since you're making visits to the hospital constantly. How about stopping by my place on the way there and I'll feed you something fresh from the microwave." OR "You've got to eat. Let me buy you a sandwich right after work so you're not starved when you start your vigil at the hospital." OR "If you want to talk, we'll talk; if you want to do something that's fun and get your mind off your troubles, let me know and I'll see what I can come up with."

Listen, don't give advice, or spout platitudes. Listening is often the most effective caring choice you can make. Even if you have talked with the person at length and a treatment process genuinely seems to have been overlooked, it may be best to leave advice-giving to others. Telling a person who faces deep grief, "It's always darkest before the dawn," is more likely to meet *your* needs than his or hers. If the other person says that, fine. Encouraging Chris to talk, or being willing to sit together silently may help more than any suggestion you can make.

Try mirroring what you see and hear. One way of demonstrating that you are *with* the other person and that you are listening involves mirroring. You are mirroring when you reflect back the person's thoughts and feelings.

If Chris tells you, "My mother is worse than ever," you capture the idea and the feelings if you say, "You're troubled—your mother has taken a turn for the worse." Mirroring or reflecting feelings effectively takes practice if it is to be done comfortably, mainly because it is not a behavior we all learned at our parents' knees; nonetheless, it can be very helpful if the other person needs the opportunity to talk about his or her concerns.

You can mirror even when no words are given you. If Chris is staring out the window you can mirror what you see with such a statement as, "You seem to be really distracted." Mirroring is often more effective than questioning.

Be a bridge to the future. Sometimes the most effective caring choice you can give to another person involves an offer for the future. "Why don't you come over on Friday and if you want to talk, we'll talk; if you want to have a distraction we'll run a video movie, play bridge, have a group in to play silly games—whatever you think you'd like."

More than once my wife and I have not been able to be present at funeral services that would have been appropriate for us to attend. When the first of those events occurred we called and offered our condolences and named a date when we would make a later visit. At the beginning of that visit we apologized profusely that we had not been able to make the trip earlier. We were told in so many words, "It was wonderful to have something to look forward to when we didn't have anything else that was positive to think about. There was a big rush of attention for a while, now it's too quiet around here. I'm glad you waited." Since then, whenever we are not able to be present to help meet the need of a close friend or relative, we try to be a bridge to the future.

With your friend Chris you might want to suggest some future action you could do together, such as: sharing a week next summer in a condominium, travelling to a state park for a day a month hence, or getting tickets together for a future series of musical programs. Chris may be too distracted to respond effectively at present, but the thoughtfulness of your suggestion is likely to be a beacon of hope for the future.

Continue to reach out to persons who are grieving. A person who has experienced the loss of an important relationship or the death of a friend or family member, often feels isolated and plays strange mind games. "Others won't want me now—we were always part of that group as a pair." "I'll only depress them." "They'll worry that I'm out to be a home-wrecker now that my partner is gone." Grieving persons need outreach from others. Many appear to be "strong" and not to need others, but that may well be a facade to protect them from being hurt.

Don't reason, "I'll receive a call when Chris is ready to talk." That call may never come. If you value your relationship, remember that you are the one who is feeling more secure now. Reach out. And continue to do so.

Caring is One of Five Choices

The Choice Awareness system suggests that caring is one of only five basic, interactive choices—therefore it is important for you not to reduce your options to four. Others around you have needs. No other choice is an effective substitute if someone you are close to needs your caring choices.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues.

Next, or in place of the above suggestion, use your journal to reflect upon the needs of others who are important to you, and to discuss your effectiveness in responding to their needs with caring choices. What recent responses have you made to others' needs? Were your responses effective? In what ways might you have responded better? What recent opportunities have you missed to show caring to others? What future plan for caring choices with a particular person might be suitable for you?

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

13
Caring Choices: Self-Caring

We all need to be skilled in making caring choices for ourselves. Caring involves learned behaviors; if we have not learned well to demonstrate self-caring, we can still develop that skill.

If you are among those who make suitable self-caring choices you can say such things as the following:

I eat sensibly.

I exercise sufficiently.

I get enough sleep.

I drink in moderation or not at all.

I take care of my appearance by dressing and grooming myself well.

I have enough confidence in myself to build effective relationships with others.

I think of myself in positive terms.

My self-talk includes more "I can's" than "I can'ts."

I have more personal strengths and desirable characteristics than deficits.

I see myself as interesting and interested, not as boring or bored.

When something goes wrong I look at it realistically, neither excusing myself too readily, nor heaping unnecessary blame on myself.

So that I am able to love my neighbor, I love myself.

OK Self-Caring

Meeting the needs of others through making OK caring choices is important; equally important is meeting your own needs through making OK self-caring choices. Relatively few people indulge themselves by ODing on self-caring choices; more people make appropriate self-caring choices and keep those choices in balance with others; but chances are you are a member of the largest group—those who care for themselves inadequately at least at times. *Is* that the group to which you belong?

What does it mean to make effective self-caring choices?

The lead statements above give many clues.

Making effective self-caring choices means that you take realistic stock of your needs and you set about to meet most of them, in the full knowledge that *every* itch does not need a scratch. If you have not been eating suitably, or if you have been indulging yourself unduly, you build a regimen for changing that pattern—because you care about yourself—and you follow that regimen. If you have tended to be unduly self-critical you build a regimen for changing that pattern as well—also because you care about yourself—and you follow that regimen, too.

Making effective self-caring choices does not mean that you indulge yourself or consider your needs always above the needs of others. Those actions show no responsibility. It is undesirable to consider only your own needs *or* those of others. Balance is the watchword.

Societal Values

In our society we seem to value self-sacrificing people who give their all for others, but we appreciate even more those individuals who keep a balance between caring for others and caring for themselves. We see those people as healthier, we respect them more, and we find it easier to like them or love them. They act in ways that tell us they are worthy of respect and love, and because they are comfortable in themselves we are comfortable with them.

"To those who have more shall be given so they shall have abundance, but from those who have nothing even that will be taken away" (Matthew, 25:29). That statement fits very well here. Try it this way: To those who love themselves and care for themselves, realistically and appropriately, love and care shall be given so they shall have them abundantly; but from those who do not love themselves or care for themselves, love and care will be taken away.

The Learning Process

You learned your self-caring skills through trial and error, direct modeling of the behaviors of others, and reinforcement and/or rejection of your behaviors. It is a good idea to take stock of your patterns of self-caring to see if they are serving you well. If you find it desirable to do so you can choose to alter your patterns, even though they may be strongly ingrained.

Once again, balance is important. If you make good caring choices for yourself *and* for others, you contribute to your own good self-feelings. When you feel good about yourself it is easier to keep your own mental health spiral moving in a positive direction.

The Keys to Change

The keys to changing your pattern of self-caring choices are similar to those for changing your pattern of caring choices with others. Briefly stated, they are:

Be alert to your own needs. Take a few moments from time to time each day to review your thoughts and feelings—especially when you are tired, frustrated, or otherwise in a negative mind-set. Figure out what your need is.

Give yourself permission to respond. Avoid indulging yourself, but in the course of time, and not always later, work toward fulfilling your need.

Acknowledge your need. State it directly to yourself and, where appropriate, to another person.

Take action if there is something you can do. Don't just stand there, do something, the saying goes. But be alert to the likelihood that at times there is really nothing you can do.

Listen deeply to the feelings you have inside yourself. Listen to the voice inside you. What are you feeling?

Mirror your own feelings for your benefit and the benefit of others. If you say, first internally, then externally, "I guess I'm still troubled about what happened between my boss and me today," the other person doesn't have to guess what is wrong or blame him or herself inappropriately.

Make a plan for the future. If you decide you need to talk, set up that opportunity—ask for it directly from a friend, or arrange for counseling with a professional. If you decide you need a distraction, arrange for it: "Ray, I need to get my mind off my worries. How about a handball game tomorrow?" You are worth caring for.

Care for Yourself

You can develop skills in caring for *others*. Your sense of personal worth and your success in life are likely to depend to a genuine extent on your doing so. And it may well be an effective *self*-caring choice for you to grow in skill in caring for *others*—since the two interact. The Choice Awareness system suggests that skill in making effective self-caring choices is an essential for success in life. You have needs. If you do little to meet your own needs, if you make ineffective or insufficient self-caring choices, it is appropriate that you change. To a genuine extent, your effectiveness as a human being depends on the self-caring choices you make.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues.

Next, discuss in your journal the extent to which the statements that head this section describe your self-caring choices. Add to the discussion other evidences of your adequate, inadequate, or OD self-caring. Consider such issues as workaholism, self-acceptance, maintaining a good physical appearance, and self-love—as opposed to self-indulgence. In Choice Awareness terms you can interpret self love as maintaining a suitable balance of self-caring with the other CREST choices. If you do not have an effective pattern of self-caring choices, write a plan for yourself, build a schedule, and, in the future, as you write in your journal, regularly consider the success you are having with your plan.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

14
Caring Choices: The Career Connection

Some individuals more than others appreciate the opportunity to make caring choices. Some careers, more than others, provide opportunities for making caring choices. People who experience too great or too little demand for their caring choices on the job may need avocational opportunities that counterbalance those demands.

Caring choices bear a relationship to careers. Every career role, including that of homemaker, can be sited somewhere on a continuum of its demands for or expectations of caring choices. Furthermore, each person fits somewhere on a continuum of comfort in making caring choices. The nurse, homemaker, and occupational therapist, when they choose their careers, buy-in to making many caring choices. On the other hand the chemist, the electrician, and the forester in the firetower do not expect to make many direct, interpersonal caring choices for others.

If you enter a field that calls for much caring, nursing for example, and you are not comfortable in making that kind of choice with great frequency, you may find yourself misplaced. A search may turn up some kind of assignment, within industry for example, in which you might use your training effectively, but not have to

demonstrate caring quite so frequently. If you do not make such an adaptation you may be a misfit in your profession. If you have a need to care for others you may still be an excellent laboratory chemist, but you will probably find it advantageous or essential to create off-the-job opportunities through your family, or through volunteer work, or both, to express your need to give care to others.

Many Careers Demand Caring Choices

Significant numbers of careers, including especially those that require leadership, have hidden demands for caring. The outstanding example is that of managerial or supervisory careers. If you chose a managerial position and you considered it in Choice Awareness terms you might assume that you would make many ruling and thinking/working choices and few caring choices. But what you are likely to find is that your supervisees often look to you for reinforcement, support, and care. Many of them see you as a parent figure—regardless of your age—whose task is in part to help them feel good about themselves. Effective managers learn to respond appropriately and sensitively to the needs of their employees for caring and concern.

Take stock of the roles you play at work and at home. Chances are, either on or off the job, or in both circumstances, there are people who want and need your care. It is probably impossible for you to be effective as a friend, supervisor, parent, spouse, etc., if those around you see you as a care-giver and you do not see yourself in that way.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues.

Next, explore in your journal the extent to which your vocational and avocational (off-the-job) life allow you and require you to make caring choices. Consider in some depth the extent to which you are comfortable in making caring choices. Discuss the kind of match that exists between you and your career, and the extent to which this exploration suggests that you need to grow in effectiveness in making caring choices on the job. If necessary, build a plan for growing in that skill.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

15
Ruling Choices: Leading Others

We all need to be skilled in making ruling choices, in taking the lead, with others. Most people see themselves as responders, thus a power vacuum exists in many relationships. Ruling involves learned behaviors; if we have not learned well to take the lead when it is appropriate for us to do so, we can develop that skill.

"Come here, you've got to see this!"

"Can you stop by for dessert tonight?"

"I've got two tickets for that performance, say the word and one is yours."

"Listen up."

"If you'll clean up the dishes I'll go get ice cream. Or vice versa."

"They're supposed to be arranged this way."

"I said STOP!"

"Don't you ever do that again!"

Beckoning or pointing the way.

Finger to lips, meaning, "Be quiet."

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Ruling Choices Involve Leadership

When you make a ruling choice, such as any of the above examples, you are exercising leadership. Any leadership action, whether it is welcome or not, is considered a ruling choice. And as with all four of the other choices you can make ruling choices that are verbal or non-verbal.

The term *ruling* may seem strong, but it serves as a warning that leadership choices can be OD, as indeed many of them are. Your ruling choice is likely to be OK if your relationship to the other person seems to make your choice appropriate, if the choice you make leads in a direction the other person might want to go, and if you state it in a positive way. Your ruling choice may even contribute significantly to the balance in your relationship and be welcomed as a major OK choice.

Ruling Choices Can Be Welcome

A large majority of human beings see themselves as responders. If that assertion is correct, in a great many relationships—perhaps in many of yours—two responders face one another, neither is comfortable in leading, and there is a power vacuum. When a power vacuum exists, you or the other person may welcome an OK ruling choice from the other.

Have you ever engaged in this kind of conversation?

"What would you like to do tonight?"

"Oh, I don't care. Anything's all right with me."

"That's how I feel too."

"So, what'll we do?"

"Whatever you want."

That conversation is an everyday example of a power vacuum.

If you are like the majority of people you hesitate to take the leadership in some of your relationships because you are uncomfortable with leading and you rationalize that the other person may not want to do what you want to do.

To what extent are you like that—with most people? With your spouse or best friend? With your father? With your immediate supervisor?

If you cannot think of a single relationship in which you hesitate to take the lead, it is possible that you are seen by others as dominating. Perhaps you should consider holding back a bit so others can feel some power in the relationship. On the other hand, if you hold back in most of your relationships and exercise leadership in only a few, you may be seen by others as contributing too little to the interaction. Perhaps you should consider making more OK ruling choices, gradually, so you and others can become comfortable with the change.

The Learning Process

As with all five CREST choices you learned your ruling choice behavior patterns through modeling, through trial and error, and through reinforcement or rejection of your leadership actions. You may have been strongly encouraged to "stand up for what you believe," "stick up for your rights," "take charge"—many males and some females have been raised with these injunctions—or those around you may have discouraged you from taking the lead.

It is not easy to alter a pattern of dominating or recessive behavior, but since each leadership action is a choice, you can change your pattern, and it may contribute positively to your own feelings about yourself, and to the relationships you have with others, if you do so.

Sex Roles and Leadership

In general, males are raised with higher expectations than females for exercising leadership, though in truth both males and females are given double messages. Boys are told: "You have to grow up to be strong and take charge—but do what Mommy tells you." Girls are told: "The male ego is fragile and you may have to let them win—but always do the best you can."

Males have seen men in leadership roles in real life, in movies, and on television, so when they enter into relationships with females they may demand leadership of themselves. If they are uncomfortable in taking leadership roles, those expectations may be difficult for them. Many males achieve a certain level of comfort in leading during the dating phase of their relationships with females, but shortly after the wedding ceremony, some of them sigh an almost-audible sigh of relief, tell themselves: "That's over," and slide back into their more comfortable role as a responder. Many a female is disappointed in her knight on a white charger—who swept her off

her feet in part by suggesting that they do all manner of interesting things—when he begins to wait for her to suggest what they might do for an evening's activity. She may be even more disappointed when he sits in front of the television set and shows little interest in doing anything. He changed his behavior to achieve a particular goal—conquest; the goal has been achieved, now he can return to his usual behavior. She thought leadership *was* his usual behavior.

To a moderate extent the same pattern exists in many friendships. Both individuals may demand of themselves more leadership action in the relationship-development stage; either or both may want to slide back into the more comfortable role of responder once the relationship is past "the honeymoon stage."

The Keys to Change

Let us assume that you can be described as basically a responder in terms of your leadership actions with others, and that you agree that some of your relationships would benefit if you made more effective ruling choices. If those assumptions fit, what are the keys to changing your patterns of choices?

Assess the situation carefully. Spend some time observing the other person's choices and yours. You may find that each of you exercises reasonable leadership and therefore you may resolve to maintain your patterns of choices as they are. You may sense that the other person resents or is bored with your inaction, and you can use that as a spur to movement. OR: You may see that the other person feels trodden down by your constant domination. Be as realistic as you can in assessing your patterns of ruling choices and their effects on the relationship.

Let us say you and Terry have had a good relationship for several years. You reflect a bit and conclude that you have not been pulling your own weight in terms of leadership. You leave nearly all of the decisions and suggestions to Terry. Terry seems to be reasonably content with the situation, but you are not—and you believe that the relationship may need bolstering even from Terry's point of view.

Seek confirmation. While it may not be appropriate in all relationships, in most it may help if you inquire how satisfied the other person is with the balance in leadership between the two of you. How you pose your question makes a difference.

For example, you might say: "Terry, I've been thinking about our friendship. The way I see it is, I tend to wait for suggestions from you and then I respond. I feel like I've not been pulling my weight and I think it might help if I told you more things I'd like us to do together and took charge in other ways a little bit more. What do you think?" OR: "Terry, I think I've been a little too dominating with you. I make all the suggestions and take charge a lot. How would it be if I held back a little and gave you some room to take the lead? Do you think that would work all right for both of us?"

Watch for opportunities to lead, and create others. Take time to think about the topics of conversation, games, puzzles, readings, and activities you have enjoyed over the span of your life and adapt those as suggestions for activities. Be alert to opportunities for you to talk about things together—after reading the newspaper and listening to the radio or watching television.

Think about the long drive you will be taking together and figure out something you can suggest that might make it more pleasurable. How? That has to fit you and Terry. Maybe the rider could read a news magazine or a series of short stories aloud. (My wife and I have enjoyed Sherlock Holmes mysteries and other short stories on several trips of over five hundred miles.) Maybe you could play a game—like competing to find the letters of the alphabet on signs you pass, or Twenty Questions. Anyway, there is something you can suggest—if you make the effort to find it. And you can encourage Terry to make suggestions of a similar variety.

Make haste slowly. Many good ideas are defeated because people make resolutions they cannot keep, and because they try to do too much at one time. Taking one more leadership action a week, or even a month, may be better for your relationship than trying some overwhelming change that you cannot sustain. For example, Terry might agree to your resolution when you say, "I'll make all the choices of things we do this week," but if it is out of character in your relationship, that kind of change may be uncomfortable for both of you. If you become discouraged you are likely to give up on the idea and backslide again—which will confirm for both of you that one of you *is* the leader and the other is not. Gradual change is likely to be more effective.

Keep a record of your actions. Teachers try new approaches with children, they make some progress but do not keep a record of it, and as a result they do not realize they have made gains, so they give

up on what might be a promising new direction. For example, if Johnny was out of his seat an average of fifteen times an hour, and the first use of a new technique changes that to twelve times, the teacher who has not kept a tally may sense no difference at all—because twelve times seems constant, may figure that the technique does not work, and may discard the approach. In changing patterns of choices with friends, relatives, and co-workers the same thing can happen. If you resolve to take one leadership action a day or a week with Terry, write down each choice you actually make, savor it, think about its effects on you and on Terry—and you are more likely to continue the new pattern of behavior.

Reward yourself for effort as well as growth. More often than not good effort is rewarded with positive outcomes; make the effort and you are likely to be rewarded. But not all new patterns of choices succeed. Terry may agree that change is warranted, but find the new pattern disquieting, and do things unconsciously or deliberately that scuttle the change. It is important that your self-talk include rewarding statements when you make a good, honest attempt to change, as well as when you succeed. After all, even if the new pattern does not work well with Terry, it may fit beautifully with another person.

Ruling is One of Five Choices

The Choice Awareness system suggests that ruling is one of only five basic interactive choices. It is important for you to have skill in this key area. You need the sense of power that exercising control over your life can give you, and you need to know that others respect your suggestions and are willing to follow your lead. Leadership is a two-way street, however. You need to make room for others to exercise leadership as well. Achieving a suitable balance between sending and receiving ruling choices may well be a suitable goal for your significant relationships with others.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues.

Next, or in place of the above suggestion, use your journal to explore your comfort or discomfort with ruling choices. With whom do you exercise leadership, regularly? With whom do you avoid taking the lead? What kinds of leadership choices do you make? In each of your significant relationships do you emphasize OK or OD ruling choices, or do you leave most or all of the ruling choices to the other person? To what extent do you act vigorously in developing new relationships, then do too little to maintain them—as with the dating-to-marriage and friend-to-friend relationships described above? Discuss the changes that would help your patterns of ruling choices with people who are important to you.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

16
Ruling Choices: Self-Ruling

We all need to be skilled in making self-ruling choices—in exercising leadership for ourselves. Ruling choices are learned over time; if we have not learned to exercise appropriate leadership for ourselves—if we approach life with too many or too few controls—it is not too late for us to refine our skills.

You make many internal self-ruling choices every day.

Right now, open your journal, write the date, this page number, and the title: SELF-RULING STATEMENTS. Write down the number and letter for the statement in each pair below that you are more likely to say to yourself.

1A. Go ahead and try. It won't be a tragedy if you don't succeed, and you'll have gained something important if you do.

1B. Don't do it. Think how awful it'll look if you fail.

2A. Wait a minute. There's too much risk in that action.

2B. Do it. Sure it's dangerous, but what's life without a little spice?

3A. You can.

3B. You can't.

4A. It'll probably work out all right. Go ahead, but watch out for problems.

4B. "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead."

5A. Don't do it just because everyone expects it.

5B. People expect you to do that, therefore you have to.

6A. There's no special problem here, so do whatever feels right.

6B. Go for it. Shake 'em up. Do whatever you can think of.

Read this paragraph, then continue your journal entry by discussing your choices. You may have interpreted items differently, but you have taken a fairly moderate stance in self-ruling if you have chosen the A responses throughout. If you have chosen the even-B responses, 2B, 4B and 6B, you probably need to put some limits on yourself, and you may want to consider the value of making more self-ruling choices. If you have chosen the odd-B responses, 1B, 3B and 5B, you may make more rigid self-ruling choices than you need to, and you might well loosen up a little.

Your Self-Ruling Choices

The pattern of ruling choices you have developed in your interactions with others is important, but the pattern of ruling choices you have developed for yourself may be even more important, since it guides your behavior in each of the CREST choices.

You may place reasonable demands and restrictions on your behavior. If you do, in all likelihood, you generally achieve an appropriate balance in self-ruling. OR: You may place very few demands and restrictions on your behavior. In that case your behavior may approach recklessness on occasion. OR: You may place a great many demands and restrictions on your behavior. In that case your behavior may be too limited, too restrained.

My advisor in graduate school, George Hill, often repeated the maxim, "Moderation in all things—except pumpkin pie." (Actually I don't think he ever ODed on pumpkin pie, either.) Moderation means being neither so predictable and controlled that you lack color and interest, nor so unpredictable and so uncontrolled that you cannot be trusted.

Think about people you really admire—those you know personally. What are they like? It is likely that they have a certain flair about them, they are energetic, humorous, different in some reasonable way, yet you can trust them and believe in them. They are not like the wildest of the Saturday Night Live crowd nor among the most controlled, predictable individuals you ever encountered.

The Learning Process

If you grew up with few controls and few expectations for your behavior, or if the adults in your life fought your battles for you and pulled your chestnuts out of the fire, as the saying goes, you probably tend toward the more radically-liberal end of the continuum. If your behavior was rigidly controlled and those around you were continuously serious and set the highest expectations for you, you probably tend toward the more radically-conservative end of the continuum. As with other choices, you learned your patterns of self-ruling through modeling, reinforcement, and trial and error—or maybe through reacting against what you saw around you. But your patterns are choices, so you can change them.

The Keys to Change

The keys to changing your patterns of *self*-ruling choices are similar to those for changing your ruling choices with others.

Assess the situation carefully. From time to time, consider your pattern of self-ruling choices. Are you too demanding of yourself, do you let yourself get by with much less than your best—whether the context is work or interpersonal relationships, or do you make choices that might more often be seen as moderate?

Seek confirmation. Check out your analysis with one or two of the people you trust most. Ask them if they see you as too demanding or too undemanding of yourself. Encourage them to be as honest with you as they can and explore with them what they mean and why.

Make haste slowly. Don't expect miracles overnight. Whether you resolve to change to be more solid and reliable on the one hand, or less boring and predictable on the other, make the change gradually. Consider informing those you trust most about your planned change, perhaps enlisting them to help you achieve your resolve.

Keep a record of your actions. Make your plan specific: "Once a day I'm going to do or say something that my friend could not predict." OR: "Since I want others to believe in me, at least once a day I'm going to do or say something that's solid and down-to-earth." Write down each action you take or statement you make that fits your plan.

Reward yourself for effort as well as for growth. Give yourself credit for the attempts you make as well as the successes you achieve in changing your patterns of self-ruling.

Rule Yourself Wisely

Developing a reasonable pattern of self-ruling choices is worth the effort. *You* are worth the effort. On the CREST and the Choice Awareness system suggest that skill in making self-ruling choices is essential for success in life. You and the others around you need to sense that you are in reasonable control of your own destiny. You serve your own needs and the needs of others best if you achieve a reasonable balance in self-ruling and allow others opportunities for leadership. And you can make changes in your pattern of self-ruling choices if you need to do so.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Look over the SELF-RULING STATEMENTS you believe you are likely to say to yourself. Spend some time *reflecting* on your choices and their meaning for you. Discuss these questions: Is the direction of your choices moderate? Do you need to put some limits on yourself? Should you loosen up a little?

You may then wish to use the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues to extend your entry. Be sure to date your entry and note this page number.

17
Ruling Choices: Assertiveness

Most of us have learned to function unassertively, while a few of us have learned to function aggressively. We all need to develop the skills of assertiveness so that we may speak up for our needs and wants, but we need to do so without running roughshod over the needs and wants of others.

The Assertiveness Continuum

In recent years you may have heard quite a bit about assertiveness. Roughly speaking it means standing up for your rights. Assertiveness stands in the middle of the continuum between unassertiveness and aggressiveness.

If you are an unassertive person you let some people "walk all over" you. Inside yourself you make sorrowing choices. To use a Choice Awareness phrase, *you choose miserableness* as a response to the negative circumstances you face.

If you are aggressive you do not let others take advantage of you, but you may take advantage of others. You make external sorrowing choices. To use another Choice Awareness phrase, *you choose meanness* as your response.

If you are assertive you react in ways that are more often appropriate. *You make OK self-ruling and other-ruling choices*. And you avoid miserableness and meanness.

When people do things that trouble you (acts of commission), or do not do things they have promised to do or that you believe they should (acts of omission), they give you opportunities—like on a multiple choice test—to check off whether you are going to be assertive, unassertive, or aggressive in your response.

Two Examples

Let us look at an example of an act of commission and an act of omission, then see what the three different kinds of responses might be like.

Commission: You hand the store clerk a twenty dollar bill, and the clerk gives you back change for a ten.

Omission: You rode to a social gathering in a friend's car; it is your agreed-on time to leave and you have a big day planned for tomorrow, but your friend makes no move to go.

Unassertive Responses

If you react *unassertively* in the store situation you may:

Wait around for a few moments, then leave frustrated.

Say gently, "I think I gave you a twenty."

Ask, "Didn't I give you a twenty?"

In the social gathering instance you may:

Drum your fingers a bit.

Cast disapproving glances at your friend.

Look at your watch several times.

Point to the wall clock when your friend looks at you.

Whisper, "It's eleven o'clock."

It is possible that an unassertive response will take care of the problem in either instance. In both situations, however, it would be easy for the other person to rationalize that you are not strongly committed to the message you are sending. If the store clerk is dishonest you may have lost your money; if not, he or she may think, "Well, I'm not certain either, but if this customer isn't sure, I'm

not going to pass out an extra ten and come up short at the end of the day." Your friend may be accustomed to more assertive approaches, and may conclude that you can stay another half hour at least. At best unassertive behavior does not seem to be a genuine call for action; at worst it seems to invite ill treatment.

Aggressive Responses

If you react *aggressively* in the store situation you may:

Say, "Come on now, what are you trying to pull. You owe me ten dollars."

Say, "Hey, Buster, I gave you a twenty. You gave me change for a ten. Fork over another ten."

Add a threatening look to your verbal behavior.

In the social gathering situation you may:

Get your friend's coat and say strongly, "Let's go, *now*."

Interrupt whatever your friend is doing and say abruptly, "Come on, time to leave."

Usher your friend unceremoniously toward the door.

As with unassertive behavior it is possible that an aggressive response will take care of the problem. In both situations, however, it is easy for the other person to get defensive or to react offensively to your words or actions. The store clerk may either be intimidated or decide to fight fire with fire. Your companion may become hostile and refuse your request, or leave with you but decide to write you off as a friend. Aggressive behavior tends to intimidate others or invite their own aggressive reactions. You may achieve your short range goal, but with your friend your long range goal of a close relationship is now totally out of reach.

Assertive Responses

If you react *assertively* in the store situation you may:

State firmly but politely, "You've given me change for a ten. I gave you a twenty" (other-ruling, implied).

Say, "I gave you a twenty. You owe me another ten."

Wait in place for a moment, maintaining eye contact, assuming that the clerk will see the error (other-ruling, implied).

In the social gathering instance you may make a combination of self-ruling and other ruling choices. For example, you may:

Wait briefly for a chance to speak and say straightforwardly, "I need to leave now" (self-ruling, other-ruling implied).

If your first approach does not work, in a second statement you may add a note of empathy, "I can tell you're really involved, but as I told you, I have a big day tomorrow, so I need to go now" (other-ruling).

If an assertive action or two on your part does not work satisfactorily, you might say, "If you're going to stay, I'll arrange another ride/call a cab" (self-ruling).

Your assertive response may or may not take care of the problem in either instance. In both situations, however, the self- or other-ruling choices you make have the advantage of being mature, straightforward, and unmistakable. They are more likely than unassertive or aggressive choices to get you your money peacefully in the first instance, and preserve your friendship in the second. Assertive self- and other-ruling choices send a message of self-assurance on your part and are more likely to elicit the desired response—both in the short and the long run.

The Power Issue

If you are like most people you are neither consistently assertive, unassertive, or aggressive. You speak up for yourself in some relationships and at particular times, you are wishy-washy in others, and you act aggressively in still others. In making your choices you pause a fraction of a second and think about the power of the other person, and you make a prediction about the responses you are likely to get back.

If you feel powerless and incapable in some relationships you may hold back, allowing others to take advantage of *you*. In other relationships in which you feel more powerful and capable you may make choices that lead *others* to feel inferior and inadequate. In still other relationships in which you feel a sense of equality—if you have developed the skill of acting assertively—you may make assertive choices. In Choice Awareness terms, you make OK self- and other-ruling choices. You state your own needs and wants clearly and encourage the other person in turn to make mature, positive responses.

Marie

Several weeks after Marie joined an ON-THE-CREST GROUP she began to see herself as alternately unassertive and aggressive. She often allowed herself to be taken advantage of by others for some time, then flew into a rage at the next evidence of what she viewed as abuse. She did this with her girlfriends, her mother—her model for such behavior, and to some extent with her boyfriend, Eric.

Marie told the group, "Just last night I told Eric that he'd have to leave at ten so I could wash my hair. I was pretty unassertive at first. One thing I said was, 'Don't you think you'd better leave now?' After a couple of such attempts I 'blew a fuse' and said, 'Eric, if you're not out of here in two minutes, you can just forget about me going with you to the dance on Saturday.'

"Fortunately," she continued, "Eric left without telling me to 'get lost,' or letting me know he'd find someone else to go with him to the dance." She went on to say that she had "blown" more than one relationship by saying such things. "I could have told Eric simply, 'I'm going to wash my hair now. You'll have to leave.'"

Marie's Personal Action Plan included talking to Eric about following through on agreements and she decided to make several assertive statements—or go off and begin to wash her hair—without resorting to aggressiveness with Eric. "He isn't the kind of guy who won't take no for an answer," she observed.

Initiating Assertively

Assertiveness is a two way street. So far we've concentrated on the idea of making OK ruling or assertive choices in *response* to the actions of others. It is equally important for you to *initiate* assertively—with OK ruling choices—rather than unassertively or aggressively.

Avoid saying, "Would you like to do the dishes?" "Don't you think you'd better go to bed now?" "Just five more minutes, OK?" Or my wife's all time least favorite form of request from a supervisor, a statement that always meant much digging into dusty files, "Wouldn't it be fun to know...?"

For me, I would never *like* to do the dishes, and I would rather not be manipulated into saying I would—though I would almost always be *willing* to do so. Most children do not really think it would

be *better* for them to go to bed than continue what they are doing. Five more minutes is seldom really *OK* if the activity is pleasurable. And the employee who is going to have to dig back in old files unaided for several days, while other work piles up, is not likely to view that as *fun*. Instead of these unassertive requests, say, "I'd appreciate it if you'd take care of the dishes while I..." "It's time for bed." "You've got five more minutes." "Within the next week, please go through the files and put together the material for a report on..."

The other extreme, the aggressive initiation, is equally undesirable, particularly so if it is a first statement: "Get in there and do those dishes now." "Go to bed!" "Quit that in five minutes or you're really gonna get it." "Get me that information out of the files—now!"

Skill in Assertiveness

It is as important to develop skill in initiating with OK ruling choices—assertive choices—as it is to develop skill in responding with OK ruling choices—for yourself or the other person. The Choice Awareness system suggests that your OK self- and other-ruling choices—assertive choices—should not be manipulative, they should show respect for the other person, and they should state your expectations in ways that are likely to be viewed by others as more positive than either unassertive or aggressive behaviors would be viewed. You need skill in initiating and responding with assertive choices; and you need to give up any over-dependence you may have on unassertive and/or aggressive choices.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues. Next, if you choose, use your journal entry to examine several of your relationships. Consider in each whether you are more often inclined to be assertive, unassertive, or aggressive. Take special note of examples of assertive behaviors on your part. Consider how you might adapt your own assertive behaviors to relationships in which you tend to be aggressive or unassertive. If appropriate, since many situations repeat themselves, build a plan for responding assertively, rather than unassertively or aggressively, with one specific individual.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

18
Ruling Choices: The Career Connection

Some individuals more than others appreciate the opportunity to exercise leadership, to make ruling choices. Some careers more than others provide opportunities for leadership, for making ruling choices. People who experience too great or too little demand for their leadership actions on the job may need avocational or other at-home opportunities that offer a balance in their lives.

Clearly there is a career tie-in to ruling choices. As with caring choices, every career role can be sited on a continuum of the demands it places on ruling choices. Likewise each person fits somewhere on a continuum of comfort in making ruling choices. The person who becomes a police officer, manager, or air traffic controller expects to make many ruling choices; the free lance artist, the musician, and the assembly line worker are not likely to expect that ruling choices will be an important part of their lives—though many exceptions in both directions may be noted.

Messages received by males suggest that they ought to lead, but those expectations do not guarantee that males will feel comfort in exercising leadership. On the other hand, messages received by females may suggest that they ought to follow, but many females are comfortable and competent in leading.

If you enter a field that calls for making many ruling choices, manager, for example, and you are not comfortable in making such

choices, you may find yourself out of your element. If you have a need to lead and your career does not provide that opportunity you may need to find or create off-the-job opportunities as an outlet for your leadership skills.

Many Careers Demand Leadership

Many careers have hidden demands for leadership. If you are a good worker you may be asked to orient new employees to the job, and you will need to tell them what to do. Further, if your skills are strong you may be offered opportunities for advancement that are likely to require leadership action on your part. Getting ahead on the job is likely to mean that you need to lead others.

When Rolf made a journal entry concerning ruling choices, he noted that he was often uncomfortable when thrust into the leadership role, but because of his height and imposing appearance, others often seemed to expect leadership of him. To compensate for his appearance, and to avoid imposing himself on others, he seldom made ruling choices—either OK or OD. He sensed that his feeling of isolation from others stemmed largely from his hesitancy to take the lead—and that others may have hesitated to take the lead with him because of his size. Rolf determined to change his pattern of ruling choices—gradually. He began by making contact with an attractive, new female co-worker. After all, with her he had no history of disappointment.

Consider the roles you play at work and at home. Your relationships on or off the job may benefit if you are comfortable in accepting leadership from others at times and in exercising leadership with others at times. You can develop skills of leadership, both with others and for yourself. Your positive view of yourself depends in part on your being able to lead *and* to follow.

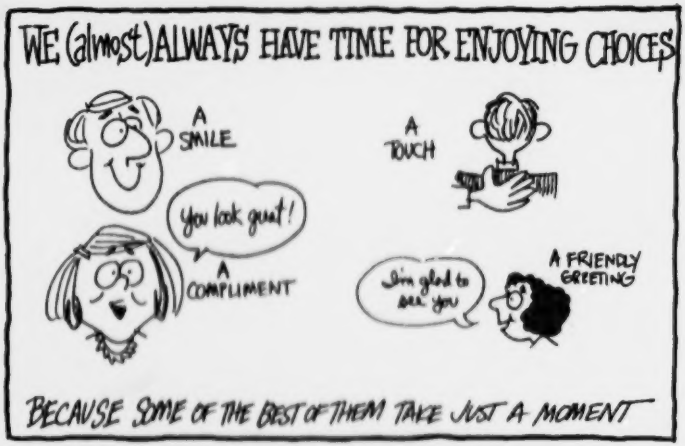
Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues.

Reflect on the self- and other-ruling choices you make in your career, and how you might beneficially change your pattern of choices.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

19
Enjoying Choices: Enjoying Others


WE (almost) ALWAYS HAVE TIME FOR ENJOYING CHOICES
A SMILE
You look great!
A COMPLIMENT
A TOUCH
I'm glad to see you
A FRIENDLY GREETING
BECAUSE SOME OF THE BEST OF THEM TAKE JUST A MOMENT

Most choices that express positive feelings are enjoying choices. Most adults see enjoying choices as belonging to children, so they restrict those choices in their lives. We all need our own permission to continue to make wholesome enjoying choices.

"I'm glad to see you."

"That's neat!"

"You did a good job on that."

"You're a super person."

"You can do it."

"You don't have an inferiority complex, you are inferior."

Smiling at another person.

Giving someone a pat on the back.

Circling thumb and forefinger, signifying OK.

Touching or hugging someone affectionately.

Tickling.

Enjoying choices express positive feelings. The examples above make it clear that these choices can be verbal or non-verbal.

OK/OD Enjoying

As is the case with caring choices, most of the enjoying choices you make are likely to be seen as OK, unless your enjoyment is at the expense of the other person. When you tease, joke about another, tickle, or in any way go beyond what feels OK to that individual, your choice is likely to be seen as OD.

There is overlap among choices, so when you make what appears to be an OD enjoying choice you may actually be making a sorrowing choice. Even though you and others may laugh, it is quite possible that your action comes from a negative rather than a positive feeling. For example, if you were to taunt a co-worker, a friend, or a civil rights marcher, to the delight of companions, you would be expressing a negative rather than a positive feeling: dislike, hatred or prejudice, rather than happiness or joy.

You need reinforcement from others, and you need innocent, positive pleasures in your life. All of us do. And you are likely to gain reinforcement and experience pleasure as a result of making reinforcing and pleasurable choices with others.

The Learning Process

Your upbringing may have emphasized what is often referred to as "the Protestant work ethic", whether or not you are Protestant, suggesting that you "put away childish things." If the word child*ish* means behavior that is immature, thoughtless, abusive—in short, behavior that is unworthy even of a child—you and I should put away those things. However, you and I should retain many of the qualities that are seen as child*like*—openness, spontaneity, and creativity, for example ". . . for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:15).

All of us were socialized to make enjoying choices in particular ways. You may have been raised with an emphasis on "putting away childish things." If so, you were given the message that enjoying choices belong to children, so, by inference, they do not belong to adults. Those messages were sent through statements like the following: "Go on out and play." "These are the best years of your life—smile." "Oh, for the carefree days of youth." "Grow up." "Act your age."

I recall having lunch with a friend and former student, a really fine fellow with a sensitive, caring wife and two lovely children. He had attended a conference session in which I had talked about

Choice Awareness. He took particular note of my observation that we assign enjoying choices to children. At lunch he shared with me something that had happened to him the night before.

He had been playing noisily on the floor with his two youngsters, and his wife came along and said, "You're worse than the kids." His caring, warm, friendly, loving wife was telling him that children are bad when they make a lot of noise, though they may be forgiven because they are children, but it is worse, perhaps unforgiveable, when adults do the same.

If in that rather idyllic home environment such words could *ever* be uttered offhandedly, even if they were not meant to hurt deeply, it suggests that such sentiments are a part of the culture. This lovely woman—herself socialized by her parents and they by theirs on into the distant past—was only repeating what she had heard others say in similar circumstances.

Making effective enjoying choices with others involves learned behavior. Your learning may have been enhanced by the presence of others who entered joyfully into life or it may have been inhibited by their absence—or both, alternately. You also engaged in a trial and error process by which you learned what enjoying choices were and were not acceptable. In many subtle and direct ways you have been socialized in the patterns of enjoying choices you make, but maintaining or changing your present patterns is your choice—every time you have the opportunity to choose.

The Keys to Change

You may need much support, perhaps even much practice, in experiencing the "natural highs" of life, and some of these involve enjoying others in wholesome and positive ways. What are the keys to changing your patterns of enjoying choices with others?

Be alert to others' wants. If you take time to think about the other person and recall something on the negative side of things, a difficulty or problem he or she is facing, and you say or do something about it, your choices probably emphasize caring. On the other hand, if you reflect for a moment and recall something on the positive side of things, a small or large accomplishment or a trait you appreciate, and you respond to that accomplishment or trait, your choices probably emphasize enjoying. To say it another way, when you meet others' *needs* you make caring choices; when you respond or initiate with others in ways that help them fulfill their *wants* you are likely to be making enjoying choices.

You can bring happiness to others through such enjoying choices as paying a compliment to a friend, putting an arm around a loved one, telephoning someone just to say hello, sending a small note or card that tells another that you appreciate him or her, acknowledging a person's birthday (or un-birthday—we get many more of those), or sharing with another a personal joy.

The phrase "enjoying choice" probably conjures up for you images of events: a vacation in the tropics, an outstanding musical or sports event, a social gathering, a walk in the moonlight. Events like these do often involve a great many enjoying choices. Focusing on enjoying choices as events, however, can lead you to the conclusion that they are inaccessible many times during your busy life. If so, you may overlook the everyday, moment-to-moment opportunities that are almost always available for enjoying others and for "smelling the roses" in the world around you.

Give yourself permission to enjoy, and take action. Allow yourself permission to respond to the small joys and potential joys of life and to share your appreciation of others.

Express your liking and loving through enjoying choices. You can express your positive feelings with a person you appreciate and like through a pat on the back, a smiling face drawn on a piece of work, or a brief thank you delivered in writing or through a note. At another level, giving someone a hug, sending that person flowers, or writing a poem in honor of that individual are examples of ways you might express your positive feelings to a person you care for or appreciate deeply.

The phrase *care for* is commonly used to describe a liking or loving relationship, but in Choice Awareness terms, unless you are meeting a need, your expressions of liking or loving are seen as enjoying choices rather than as caring choices. Actually, many behaviors can be either caring or enjoying; for example, a hug. If you hug someone out of liking or loving, as a gift—a positive feeling, you are making an enjoying choice. If you hug someone because you know that person is hurting, and you want to ease the hurt in some way, you are making a caring choice.

It is likely that you can contribute more to your relationships through enjoying choices—through expressing your positive feelings—than through all of the other choices combined.

When David began to explore enjoying choices he thought that he was highly capable on that score. After all, he took time to do some of the things he liked best: play tennis, fish, scuba dive.... What he learned quickly was that his view of enjoyment involved events, and generally competitive events at that. His tennis playing was only a positive experience if he won; fishing was only satisfactory if he caught the biggest fish; and even in the solitary activity of scuba diving he felt compelled to find a new discovery, to go further, or to stay under the water longer than he had before. Largely as a result of his strict, unloving, unforgiving background he felt unable to reach out to others in positive ways. He could still hear his father admonishing him to be serious, put his nose to the grindstone, be better than the rest. That left little room for enjoyment. Despite that, David felt that he had been fortunate indeed in his choice of Laura as his wife, and their three youngsters brought him a good deal of joy—though he seldom showed it. He resolved to increase his expression of appreciation toward all four of his treasured family members.

Emphasizing Enjoying Choices

The Choice Awareness system puts great stress on making OK enjoying choices. When you make enjoying choices that are truly OK you are not being child*ish*, you are expressing yourself in positive, open, generous, child*like* ways. You need well-developed skill in making enjoying choices with others. We all do.

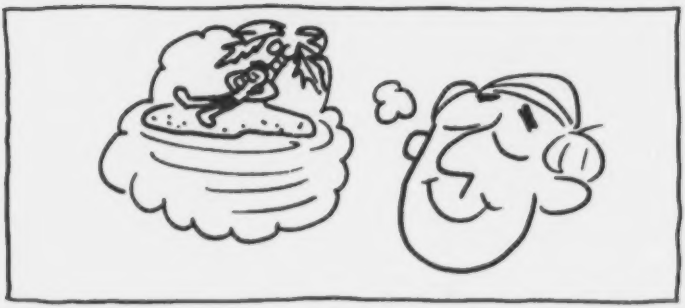
Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues.

Next, if you choose, use your journal entry to reflect upon the extent to which you make OK enjoying choices that respond to the wants of others. Describe how you believe you were socialized to be generous or miserly with compliments, small positive actions, smiles, enthusiastic greetings, etc. Explore the extent to which you have been caught up in a concern about being seen as child*ish*, and have therefore limited your child*like* behavior. If appropriate, build a plan for making enjoying choices with a specific person.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

20
Enjoying Choices: Self-Enjoying



We all need to give ourselves permission to make self-enjoying choices. Such choices need not be selfish; often they are the best basis for making enjoying choices involving others. The quality of self-enjoying choices we make reflects our self-feelings.

In chapter eleven, "Choosing Your Feelings about Yourself," we considered choices involving self-feelings, and we encouraged you to build a list of things you can do. In chapter thirteen, "Caring Choices: Self-Caring," we encouraged you to explore your self-caring choices and to express appreciation and love for yourself through those choices. Here we stress that loving yourself can go well beyond caring for yourself—yet you need not be puffed up, self-centered, or careless of the needs of others.

If you make suitable self-enjoying choices you can say:

I am good company for myself; I keep myself well entertained when I am alone.

I am interested in many things, deeply interested in a few things.

I am seldom bored or boring, and I see those matters as being closely related.

I love life.

I like the way I look and I keep myself looking good.

I have a number of positive personal traits; among them: honesty, friendliness, optimism, a pleasant outlook. . . (think of several of your own positive traits).

I am in control of most aspects of my life.

What I do I choose to do.

What I am I choose to be.

I like myself. I love myself.

Your Self-Enjoying Choices

Helping others fulfill some of their wants through making OK enjoying choices is important; equally important is fulfilling some of your own wants through OK self-enjoying choices. A few people indulge themselves by ODing on self-enjoying choices. Some people make appropriate self-enjoying choices and keep those choices in balance with others. The majority of people, and you may well be among them, give too little time to enjoying themselves.

When you make genuine self-enjoying choices you make them from a sense of internal security, a sense of being at peace with yourself. When you make choices that *appear* to be self-enjoying, but are not, you make them from a sense of insecurity, from a sense of being at odds with yourself or out-of-sync with your world.

If you focus on yourself to the exclusion of others, you are making your choices from a set of negative feelings. At best you are making self-caring choices to compensate for your poor self-feelings; at worst you are making sorrowing choices that masquerade as enjoying choices, perhaps through sarcasm toward others, or biting, self-directed humor. If you balance your focus on yourself with your focus on others, and if you make your choices from a set of positive feelings, your self-enjoying choices are OK.

You learned your pattern of self-enjoying choices through trial and error, through direct modeling of the behavior of others, and through the reactions you received when you made self-enjoying choices. It is important to take stock of your patterns of self-enjoying periodically to see if they are serving you well. If after taking stock you believe you need to change your patterns of self-enjoying, you can choose to alter them—though it may not be easy to do so.

The Keys to Change

The keys to changing your patterns of self-enjoying choices are similar to those for changing your enjoying choices with others.

Be alert to your own wants. Take some time now and then to consider what is fulfilling and meaningful for you. You are a worthwhile person. Your wants are important. If your significant wants are unmet it is unlikely that you will be able to meet the wants or the needs of others.

Give yourself permission to feel good about yourself, to love yourself, and to enjoy yourself. Permit yourself to live some of your life *for you*—and to enjoy it. You may see it as noble, you may even believe you are fulfilling some moral high purpose, if you live your life totally for the sake of others; but living a reasonable portion of your life for yourself as well has at least three significant advantages.

First, you are unlikely to indulge others more than they need. Many mothers who are not employed outside the home, for example, do too much for their children, perhaps out of a sense that they *must* do most of the chores to justify remaining at home. Their children might well be given a better start in life if they were taught to contribute, rather than to accept help continually from a self-sacrificing parent. Even handicapped children need to be encouraged to develop as much independence as they can reasonably tolerate. A second advantage in living part of your life for yourself is that you offer others a more realistic and balanced model to follow if you achieve a reasonable balance between enjoying others and enjoying yourself. A third advantage, supported in scripture and in good psychology, is that you need to love yourself if you are to be effective in loving others. The injunction, love your neighbor as yourself, means you must first love yourself.

Express your good feelings for yourself through enjoying choices. It would be well if during every day of your life you took a few moments to reinforce your strengths and your good feelings for

yourself—if you used some time to express your love for yourself so that, in turn, you might love your neighbor better. You know that if you say something that is positive and reinforcing to others—if you help them feel good about themselves—they are likely to respond positively. Apply the same generalization to yourself. Regularly say something positive and reinforcing to yourself, help yourself feel good about you, and you are more able to make positive choices both with others and for yourself.

The Sailboat Analogy Revisited

We have previously used the analogy of the sailboat on calm waters. That is similar to the times in your life when nothing much positive is going on, when you are depressed or bored. If you are like most people, in such a fix you wait for others to come along and blow wind into your sails—to put excitement in your life. You have the power on your own to stir up the wind and get your boat moving—to make enjoying choices for yourself or with others. At the very least you can toss an enjoying choice into the waters, for yourself or others, and ripples will extend outward and go on and on.

Enjoying Choices are Essential

It is likely that you can do more to help your relationships with others through enjoying choices than through all of the other choices combined. You are more able to make enjoying choices with others if you have a strong sense of self-confidence and an appreciation of yourself. Your sense of self-confidence and self-appreciation can be greatly enhanced if you make OK self-enjoying choices.

When Marilyn took stock of her choices, she realized that she had cast herself as a kind of Cinderella, sacrificing herself and her wants and needs for the sake of her children and her husband. Her children had become unappreciative and grasping in part because she did so much for them, and she had "let herself go" as well. She resolved to complete her interrupted undergraduate degree work in chemistry and to spend an hour a day on self-caring activities. When she came to the consideration of self-enjoying choices, Marilyn realized that she had been even more remiss in this area than in self-caring. To some degree she appreciated her aerobics class and the course work she took from time to time, but the significance of both of these pursuits for her was not that they were enjoyable, but that

they were *good for her.* She thought about how little she let those activities really engage her mind; she realized that she continually rushed from one activity to another with a great sense of urgency, never allowing herself the luxury of the social benefits she might gain from them.

Marilyn resolved to make two changes in her choice patterns to allow for more self-enjoying choices. First, she decided to take some extra time on campus to immerse herself in the aspects of study that intrigued her, and to spend some time with other strong students in her field—to let their enthusiasm feed hers. Second, she decided to become a regular part of the pre-aerobics class gathering because she thoroughly enjoyed that group of people, and she began to develop friendships with two individuals in that group who seemed to her to be quite special.

The Choice Awareness system suggests that skill in making effective self-enjoying choices is essential for success in life. If you are to have a pleasurable, satisfying, significant life you need to use your skills in making enjoying choices both for yourself and with others. Loving yourself goes beyond caring for yourself in minimal ways; it involves deep appreciation of who you are and what you can do and can be; and it is an essential base for loving others effectively.

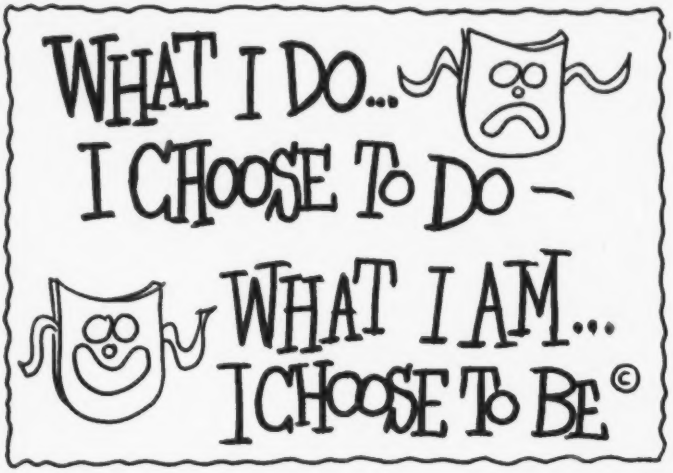
Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues.

Next, or in place of the above suggestion, use your entry to explore the kinds of self-enjoying choices you make, and your sense of comfort with those choices. Consider whether or not you might OD on self-enjoying by indulging yourself, perhaps because you need to develop more genuine, positive feelings about yourself. Consider whether you are too self-sacrificing, living your life too little for yourself, because you do not see yourself as a worthwhile person. Consider whether or not you give yourself sufficient permission to like, to love, yourself. If appropriate, build a plan for making a change in your pattern of self-enjoying choices as a result of this brief exploration. Discuss the effects you expect if you succeed in making the changes you plan.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

21
Enjoying Choices: The Career Connection



Most people appreciate the opportunity to make enjoying choices, but make them sparingly both on- and off-the-job. Some careers, more than others, provide opportunities for making enjoying choices. People who experience too great or too little demand for enjoying choices on the job may need avocational or other at-home opportunities that balance the choices they make in their careers.

There is a career tie-in to enjoying choices that is often neglected in career exploration. No matter what your career, homemaker included, it can be sited somewhere on a continuum of emphasis on enjoying choices. Further, you and all other people fit somewhere on a continuum of comfort in making enjoying choices. If you are a recreation worker, if you are involved in athletics, or if you are an entertainer, you expect to engage in hard work, but you also expect to be directly involved in making enjoying choices—more than you would, perhaps, if you were an accountant, a laboratory technician, or a university professor, to cite three contrasting examples.

If you enter a field that calls for many enjoying choices and you are not comfortable in making those choices with great frequency, you may find yourself misplaced, and you may even need to consider making a career shift or a major change in your own pattern of choices. If you have a strong need for enjoying choices you may still be an excellent accountant, but it may help if you create on-the-job or off-the-job outlets for your enjoying choices with your co-workers, through your family, or as a volunteer, for example.

Every Career Offers Opportunities for Enjoying Choices

Despite what appears to be "the fit" of enjoying choices, however, every career has hidden opportunities for you to make enjoying choices. Even more important, nearly any career you might hold cries out for commitment, provides you opportunities to make enjoying choices with co-workers, gives you opportunities to feel good about what you do, and, if you allow it to, can engage your attention in positive ways. You can enhance the sense of meaning you feel in your life through making more OK enjoying choices—through discovering or creating opportunities to make such choices—on or off the job.

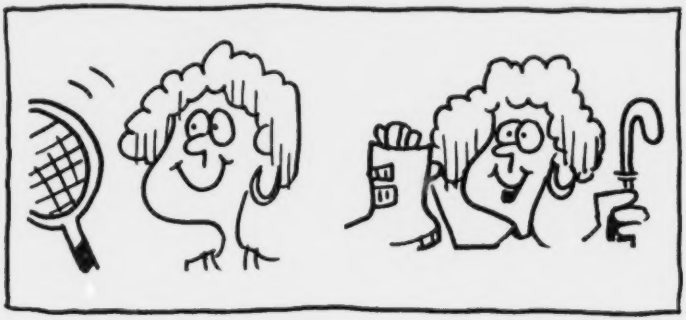
Take stock of the roles you play at home and at work. Chances are, both on and off the job, you will discover that you have available to you many opportunities to make more enjoying choices both with others and for yourself.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues.

Next, if you choose, reflect on the self- and other-enjoying choices you make in your career, and how you might beneficially change your pattern of choices. Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

22
Some Enjoying and Caring Choices



Self-caring and self-enjoying choices complement one another. Vigorous activity and activities that involve relaxation can contribute to personal well-being and to a sense of pleasure. To feel fulfilled, we need both kinds of choices in our lives.

What have you done for yourself lately?

Do you exercise—for your health or for fun or for both purposes?

Do you regularly engage in relaxation activities?

Have you ever tried transcendental meditation or meditation of any sort—even just a few moments of quiet time for yourself?

Do you take walks—for pleasure or for their benefits?

Do you have a hobby, a pursuit, a passion you engage in on a regular basis?

How often do you laugh?

Do you frequently read challenging and enjoyable materials?

Enjoying and Caring Interrelate

Enjoying and caring merge together on many choices involving activities. Do you engage in your favorite actions because they are good for you, because they engage your mind or your body in constructive ways, or because they bring you pleasure?

Whatever you do primarily because it is good for you we call a self-caring choice, but if it does not give you pleasure as well, if it is not in part an enjoying choice for you, you are not likely to keep it up for very long. If you have doggedly pursued an activity for a long period of time, thinking of it strictly as a self-caring choice, it might be well to take stock and realize that you would not have kept it up if it did not have pleasurable aspects to it. Maybe you ought to specify what those aspects are—and enjoy it more. If there is no true enjoyment in it for you, consider an alternative activity.

Allison kept up her jogging over many months, but she often told others that she hated it. When she took stock, she could not see pleasure in the activity anywhere, so she substituted a vigorous walking regimen for jogging. She is now a regular walker and touts the benefits and the lessened likelihood of physical difficulties from walking. It takes her longer, but she continues to get her exercise, and she enjoys seeing things that she never noticed while jogging.

Let us look at the flip side of the point we have just made. Whatever you do primarily because it brings you pleasure we would call an enjoying choice, but if it does not benefit you in some way, if it is not in part a self-caring choice, you might want to consider why you continue to do it. There may be a gain you are overlooking. If so, specify it—and engage in the pursuit more vigorously. If there is no true benefit, perhaps you ought to consider another activity.

An Illustration

Howard thought about the one regular, pleasurable activity in his life, that of stopping at Jake's Bar on the way home from work. He initially felt some guilt because it seemed to have no benefit for him. A few minutes reflection, however, and Howard realized that Jake's Bar was his club, the center of social activity in his life, the one place he could let down his hair and have a few laughs before facing his wife and all her emotional problems after enduring difficulties all day in his company's Customer Service Department. Howard decided that he would not give up the pleasure of Jake's, on the

contrary that he would be even more expansive in using the opportunity to relate to others, but that he would limit himself to one beer, or something nonalcoholic. That would help him maintain his contacts with others, and keep him safe on the drive home.

Positive Addiction

Taking some time to socialize with others, jogging, and walking are three possible self-caring and enjoying choices. The two physical activities have potential to be what William Glasser (1976) called a *Positive Addiction*, an area for growth that is important in itself and that can help us for the rest of our lives. Glasser suggested that we might each benefit if we engaged in an activity that fit that description. Further examples include these alphabetically-listed possibilities: baths, bird watching, chanting, composing, exercising, gardening, hiking, journaling, knitting, meditation, needlepoint, religious faith, sewing, singing, weight lifting, and yoga.

If a positive addiction is to be of greatest benefit, Glasser noted, it must be engaged in on a regular basis until an addictive state is achieved; that is, until discomfort is felt if the activity is omitted. He suggested seven criteria for an activity that might serve as a positive addiction: (1) it is noncompetitive; (2) it can be done for about an hour each day; (3) ultimately it may be done with a minimum of mental effort; (4) it is something that can be done alone so that the presence or the cooperation of others is not required; (5) it has physical, mental, or spiritual value; (6) it has the potential for contributing to personal improvement; and (7) it can be engaged in without self-criticism.

In Choice Awareness terms, a positive addiction is a self-caring, self-enjoying activity that is thoroughly engaging. What *do* you do, what *might* you do, that would qualify as a positive addiction?

One neutral or even negative addiction that you may have is that of television watching. If you are part of the vast majority of our nation's people who have let others be active for you while you sit in comfort and watch, it would be well to think about giving up some of your viewing time to take greater charge of your life, to become more active, and to find something to do that has more potential benefit for you.

Physical Activity

Physical activity does not have to be your personal selection for a positive addiction, but it is essential that you make time in your world for physical activity.

Your life doubtlessly has many stressors in it. As a creature of this world you were designed to meet stresses that are primarily physical, rather than emotional. You were ingeniously created to be capable of making strong physical responses to physical dangers. When you encounter stress, many of your systems react vigorously to enable you to respond. Your pupils dilate to give you better visual acuity, your heart and respiration rates increase to pump blood and oxygen to active muscles, and your glands secrete adrenaline and other fluids that are designed to help you meet your challenges.

When you meet a stressor, your body reacts in ways your ancestors' bodies did when they met a lion face to face, or when they were marshalling all their powers to pursue and kill an animal for meat. Your ancestors dissipated the outpouring of fluids, sugars, and fats in very physical ways through actions involving fight or flight. By contrast, you may feel that you must react in a controlled way to the people and events that stress you. You must be cool—on the outside.

Experts have come to the conclusion that if we are physically able, we should engage in vigorous physical activity that stimulates the heart and lungs for at least twenty minutes per day, four or five times per week. However, current information suggests, logically enough, that *some* exercise is clearly better than *none*. Some people avoid exercise for fear of a heart attack, ignoring the fact that the heart is a muscle and needs exercise, and that exercise increases the strength of the heart so that it is able to do its job more efficiently.

What do you do for physical activity? Jogging, swimming, walking vigorously, aerobics, bicycling, using a rowing machine, . . .? If you are doing less than is essential for good health, discuss the matter with your physician, and unless you are advised against it, build gradually toward the goal of exercising twenty minutes a day, four or five times a week—but if you balk at doing that much, at least do *something*, regularly. Though exercise may *seem* only to be a self-caring choice, eventually it may become an enjoying choice as well.

A specific problem that affects a large proportion of our population is that of *lower back pain*. A minimal level of exercise and the high proportion of activities that get us working out in front of ourselves,

are two of the factors that account for the high frequency of back problems. Personal experience with severe back pain has led me to conclude that most of us are in great need of extension exercises—gradually incorporated and increased in frequency.

Extension Exercises

In simplest terms, extension exercises are those activities that get us bending backwards while stretching abdominal muscles. Try one right now where you are sitting. Reach one hand, then the other, toward the ceiling; as you do so, pull your arm and your head back and feel your abdominal muscles extend and your back and lower back muscles contract. Throughout the day, for example, when I SAVE on the computer, I try to remember to do that. Two other extension exercises I use when I can be more purposeful are a prone press and an opposite arm and leg raise. The prone press is like a pushup, but less strenuous; from a prone position, use your arms and shoulders to raise your body from above the waist only, and hold it up for a second or two. The opposite arm and leg raise is also done in the face-down prone position; raise your right arm and left leg and hold, then raise your left arm and right leg. Building gradually to twenty prone presses and twenty opposite arm and leg raises once or twice a day may stave off the back problems you might well face one day.

Biofeedback

Biofeedback, which involves measuring signals of stress from the body, is useful as a way of helping people understand what the body has always tried to tell them in a rather gross way. Through such measures of bodily changes as temperature, pulse rate, brain waves, and muscle tension, biofeedback can clarify how you are responding to your stressors, and as a result you can learn to control your responses to those stressors to minimize their negative effect. Biofeedback measures small bodily changes; once you know about them, you can learn to send more tranquil, relaxing messages to the brain, which in turn will relay those messages to the appropriate parts of the body when you experience those changes. You get information about the imbalances you experience as a result of stress, and about the success of your actions in correcting the imbalance. Biofeedback works because it tells you how you are responding to stress and it helps you figure out what you need to do to cope with it.

The choices you learn to make generally involve relaxation and fantasy; these are enjoying choices.

Laughter

Another self-caring and enjoying choice is laughter. We have heard for years that laughter is the best medicine, an idea borrowed from Proverbs (17:22), "A merry heart does good like a medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones." Norman Cousins, in his book, *Anatomy of an Illness* (1979), argued that laughter, creativity, the will to live, hope, faith, and love have physiological significance in both preventing and curing illness. The discovery of endorphins, nature's own healing chemicals, gives support to laughter and other choices as positive agents for health—and they induce no negative side effects to worry about.

Because he believed he got plenty of good exercise as he worked at his tasks in the oil-drilling company, and because laughter abounded among himself and his co-workers, Merrill decided he needed most to think about a positive addiction as a self-caring and enjoying choice. The idea appealed to him greatly, since it would get him away from sitting so long in the evenings in front of his television set. Initially Merrill could not think of a good outlet, but then he recalled the absorption he had once felt in stamp collecting. He decided that would do well for him as a positive addiction, since it differed greatly from his work and would engage his mind in a very different way. He decided to give an hour a night to philately, and was greatly pleased with his choice of activity.

The Importance of Self-Caring and Self-Enjoying

A variety of activities can engage your mind and body, and a whole range of actions in the realm of relaxation, meditation, guided fantasy, and yoga can help you clear away thoughts that stress you, so that you can approach life in a more positive way. These are essentially self-caring activities that open the door to enjoying choices. The Choice Awareness system suggests that it is important for you to build into your life self-caring and self-enjoying choices.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues.

Take some time to explore whether or not you have what qualifies as a positive addiction; if you do not engage in such an activity, consider what might serve this purpose for you. Discuss your physical activities—the amount of time you spend in an average week, how you distribute the time, and in what ways you use it. If you are not engaging in a reasonable minimum of exercise, what might serve as a suitable activity for you? What place does laughter hold in your life? What might you do if laughter is neglected in your life—what would work for you? If appropriate, build a plan for yourself for a positive addiction, exercise, and laughter.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

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Glasser, W. (1976). *Positive addiction.* New York: Harper and Row.

23
Self-Sorrowing Choices: The OD Options

There are two basic OD ways of responding to the negatives that inevitably come our way. We can keep inside our negative feelings, and the word *miserableness* may characterize our responses. Or we can take our negative feelings out on others—through *meanness*.

What do you do with the hurts, frustrations, anguishes, and annoyances that inevitably come your way? Whatever you do is more likely than not a sorrowing choice—and may be OD.

Right now, open your journal, write the date, this page number, and the title: RESPONSES TO NEGATIVES and use this code to tell how often you make the kind of response indicated. VO = very often, meaning that in negative circumstances I *say* or *do* this kind of thing very often, O = often, S = seldom, or AN = almost never. The statements are presented in full below, but you may wish to copy only the item number and the italicized words in your journal.

How often do you *say* the following when negatives come into your life?

1. *I can handle this.*
2. Oh, no, *not again.*
3. *I'm mad* enough to punch someone.
4. *I'm* always getting *dumped on.*

5. It's just *a challenge*.
6. Those _____s (fill in the blank) will *hear from me*!

How often do you *do* the following when negatives come into your life?

7. *I get upset* and stay that way.
8. *I pound tables,* thrash around.
9. *I talk with someone* about what's bugging me.
10. *I yell at somebody.*
11. *I wring my hands* or cry.
12. I take action, *I do something*.

You have three basic responses you can make when your world is spinning in a direction you do not want it to go.

Miserableness

One response you can make is that of letting the negatives you face eat on you; if you take that option, you keep what is bothering you inside yourself and become miserable. To use a fancy phrase, you *internalize your negative feelings*. If you used the code VO or O for items 2, 4, 7, or 11, you make some OD sorrowing choices of the miserable variety; at least some of the time you choose miserableness. Nearly all of us do that, *some of the time*, especially when we feel powerless to change things that affect us.

Now and then, when all avenues toward more effective action seem to be blocked, it may be better to keep your miserableness inside than to fight back or take action. But many people choose to be miserable far more often than is good for them. Could that group include you?

A Personal Antecdote

I would like to tell a story on myself. I have always considered myself an alert driver. A couple of years ago I found that occasionally, when I seemed to be wrapped up in my own thoughts, I would signal a right hand turn, and find that the signal did not cancel. My left turn signal was on! I had apparently signalled a left turn instead. I began to think I was an early candidate for Alzheimers disease, and I worked harder than ever to stay alert—but always I was lulled into forgetting the problem when it reappeared. Then, there it was again! My left turn signal clicked another warning of my deterioration. I

feared that I was a hazard on the road. Then I began to question whether my teaching and my writing might be as out-of-touch as my driving seemed to be.

One day, after I had endured this challenge for several weeks, on my drive home I went out of my way and made numerous right turns, forcing myself to stay fully alert to each one. I was desperate to determine if I were indeed to blame. Finally it happened when I was fully aware. I signalled a right hand turn; as I finished the turn the signal cancelled; then as I straightened the steering wheel the left turn signal came on by itself. "My problem" was a purely mechanical one I had never heard of before.

I was vindicated. Suddenly my view of my driving took a very positive turn. All thought of Alzheimers left my mind. And I knew my teaching and writing were on track.

The Question of Self Blame

When an aspect of life is not going well it is appropriate for me to ask myself two questions: Am I to blame? Did I do something that precipitated this? But it is not healthy or reasonable to continually blame myself willy-nilly or to jump to the conclusion that I just got what I deserved.

Bits and pieces of three songs come to mind. The verse to "I'm Always Chasing Rainbows" in part says, "Why have I always been a failure, what can the reason be? I wonder if the world's to blame, I wonder if it could be me." Another—the title appears at the end of the brief segment—says, "I guess I'm just a fool who never looks before he jumps, *Everything Happens to Me.*" A third, *"If He Walked into My Life,"* says, "Was I soft or was I tough, did I give enough, did I give too much?"

Listen to the world around you. Self-blaming messages—messages of miserableness—can be heard in abundance. Where it is appropriate, fine, blame yourself, then move on to action. But don't choose to respond to all manner of negatives with miserableness. Don't make that your style of choosing.

Meanness

Another option you have for your negative feelings is to make a direct challenge to the negatives you face, put them outside yourself—act or speak in a way that might be seen as mean. To use another fancy phrase, you can *externalize your negative feelings*. If you used the code VO or O for items 3, 6, 8, or 10, you make at least some OD sorrowing choices of the mean variety—you choose meanness. The truth is that nearly all of us do that some of the time, especially when we feel powerful and in charge of those around us. Now and then, but rarely, when all avenues toward more effective action seem to be blocked, it may be better to go beyond assertiveness to aggressiveness, to fight or fight back, rather than keep your hurt or angry feelings inside.

Some people resort to meanness far too readily. Take stock. Could that group include you, sometimes, with some people? Parents and teachers with children, spouses with one another, may feel blocked and powerless in many areas of their lives, and thoughtlessly attack those they feel they have some power over. If you call names, slam doors, or use cutting humor against someone, you are probably externalizing your negative feelings. You may do these things at times or in ways that appear to be socially acceptable, that play to the balcony and get a laugh, but these actions are likely to qualify as OD sorrowing.

The wife in a couple I know makes a regular joke as the air-conditioning or heating season comes on. She announces that no matter how hot or cold it is her husband does not want the air-conditioning on until the Fourth of July or the heat on until after Halloween. Nearly everyone understands that she makes the choices she wants on the heating or cooling at home regardless of her husband's preference, and this predictable interchange seems to add spice to the relationship. It is basically a harmless comment, but it is the kind of comment that might ultimately create an irreparable gulf between the two.

Listen to the world around you. Messages that are critical of others—messages of meanness—are heard in abundance. "Meathead!" "One of these days, pow, right in the kisser." "Stifle yourself." "I can't believe you could be so stupid." If you are going to be content in this world it is important that you choose not to respond to situations with meanness. Don't make that your style of choosing.

Vacillation

Another thing you can do with your negative feelings is to spend time on the miserableness end of things, then switch to meanness and say, "I took all I could stand." Transaction analysts talk about collecting brown stamps and then cashing them in for a big rage. Like most people, you probably do that from time to time. When negatives come your way you take them in and take them in and take them in, and then, when you decide you have had enough, you explode. You make miserable choice after miserable choice, then, pow, right in the kisser, literally or figuratively.

You say things like "I put up with all I could from him and then I. . .," and you end by mentioning a choice that qualifies as meanness. Others nod and sympathize because you acted the martyr longer than they believe they might have in the same circumstances.

In our world we use phrases like righteous indignation and justifiable homicide, though our actions may be neither righteous nor justified. The truth is that neither meanness or miserableness is functional. And vacillating between the two, even when we feel justified in doing so, is not appropriate.

There are other alternatives.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Look over the list of things you are likely to say or do when negatives come your way. Spend some time *reflecting* on your list and what it means to you.

Take some time to make notes about the kinds of things that bring sorrow to your life, and the ways in which you respond to your frustrations and concerns. Are there people with whom you are frequently miserable? Mean? In what ways do you express your negative feelings? What changes, if any, do you want to make in your responses to negatives?

You may then wish to use the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues to expand your entry.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

24
Self-Sorrowing Choices: One OK Option

When negatives come our way, rather than responding with *miserableness* or *meanness*, we can *share openly* what is troubling us; that is frequently the most OK choice we can make.

OK Sorrowing

If externalizing (meanness), internalizing (miserableness), and vacillating (collecting brown stamps and then exchanging them for a big "blowup") are not appropriate, what other choice is left?

OK sorrowing.

What constitutes an OK sorrowing choice?

In the last section, if you used the code VO or O for items 1, 5, 9, or 12, and did not use VO or O for any of the other items, you probably make OK choices in many negative situations.

You have often heard the suggestion that you should let off steam through exercising—basically a combination of enjoying and working choices, or that you should puzzle out what is truly bothering you and take action to alleviate the problem—basically a thinking/working choice. Both suggestions are useful, often essential. What these responses lack is some kind of direct means of alleviating the strong negative feelings that sweep over you.

Unload

What you may need most when negatives come into your life is a chance to unload your feelings. Often you remain blind to the best options you have available to you until you have "let off steam." But a strong societal message may inhibit you. It suggests "be strong, don't burden others, work it out yourself."

What is a person to do?

First, consider what happens when you have strong feelings and you "keep the lid on." The steam inside you keeps your eyes flashing, flares your nose, and sets your voice on edge. You walk in at home and toss your briefcase or lunch pail in the corner, grab for the newspaper, slouch into a chair, and leer at those around you, daring them to invade your space. Your spouse might think, "I guess I'm still being punished for yesterday." Junior may think, "Uh, oh, I forgot to put gas in the car last night." Sis wonders, "Did I leave my roller skate on the stairs?" And Bowser and Tabby slouch behind the sofa or under the chair, feeling the vibrations, and wanting to be safe.

It *is not* strong to hold in negative feelings since others may blame themselves for causing them. It *is* strong to make simple, straightforward, OK sorrowing statements: "Things were really tough at work today, and I have to have a few minutes to settle down." If they could, even the walls of the room might heave a sigh of relief.

Share With the Person Involved

When you feel burdened, find a counselor or another professional on whom to unload. Or tell your spouse or friend what is troubling you—straightforwardly and briefly. Now and then, when it seems safe, take the problem directly to the person—if there is one—who is involved. That is risky, and it is a good idea to try to maintain an even-handed approach to the issue, "Look, I know I've been hard to get along with lately, and we need to talk about that,

but I get irritated beyond all endurance when you don't put the toothpaste cap back on (or whatever)."

Before you make a mountain out of a toothpaste cap, though, it might be well to consider for a moment whether or not that minor irritation is worth the trouble. Think about it: If that person walked through the door and were hit by a car or left and never returned, wouldn't you even miss the wet soap, the socks on the floor, or the cap off the toothpaste? That does not mean you should not challenge the cap-off problem, it just means that you should keep it in perspective.

Write Down Your Thoughts

There is one other person you can always unload on. Yourself. Keeping a journal and extending it and putting your negative thoughts on paper, can give you an outlet for figuring out what really troubles you and help you plan to make the choices that may meet your needs. But it is probably best not to rely solely on your journal to help you. When you let others in on your troubles, you give them a chance to make caring choices toward you. Your important relationships gain if there is a balance among your CREST choices; and two significant elements of that are that you share your sorrows and allow others to care for you.

When Jennifer thought about her pattern of sorrowing choices she could see that she let matters build up for some time, then, when she felt her actions were justified, she exploded. It concerned her that both her withholding and her exploding were hurting her relationship with Jack, her husband of three years. She realized that she seldom made straightforward statements about the matters that troubled her. She knew that she had a lot of old business left over from an abusive childhood, and with Jack's encouragement, she decided to seek counseling to see if she could get over her pent-up anger and hurt. When she told Jack that she thought she needed help in bringing out her immediate frustrations, he proved to be very helpful. A statement of his was very important to her: "When I ask you how you're doing and you answer 'Fine,' through clenched teeth, I worry that I'm responsible for whatever's bothering you. Sometimes I don't learn for days whether or not I was to blame or if something at work got under your skin. I'd rather *know*—either way."

OK Sorrowing is Essential

The Choice Awareness system suggests that skill in making effective sorrowing choices is essential for success in life. A pleasurable, satisfying, significant life depends in part on your finding suitable outlets for the inevitable frustrations and hurts that come your way. Liking and loving yourself means that you can admit that matters concern and trouble you from time to time; and when you admit your concerns you are in a better position to make the choices that are suitable to alleviate them.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues.

Take some time to make notes about the ways in which you respond to your frustrations and concerns. Are your responses straightforward and direct? What outlets do you use to unload your troubles when they are especially heavy?

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

25
Self-Sorrowing Choices: Other OK Options

THAT THE BIRDS OF WORRY AND CARE FLY OVER YOUR HEAD — THIS YOU CANNOT PREVENT
BUT THAT THEY BUILD NESTS IN YOUR HAIR- THIS YOU CAN PREVENT
a Chinese Proverb

Sorrowing is a self-choice. Most of us can more effectively handle the negatives that come our way if we stop "awfulizing," if we share power with others, if we make structured sorrowing choices, and if we use the technique known as thought-stopping.

Sorrowing is always a self-choice. In the following chapter we will look at how we *do*, and how we *can*, respond to the sorrowing choices of others, but before we do, let us look at some other ways we can handle our own sadnesses, hurts, and frustrations.

Awfulizing

Albert Ellis (1974) suggested that we often turn inconveniences into catastrophes by "awfulizing" about them. Instead of saying, "It's too bad that I don't get along with my Dad, though I wish I could," we say, "It's terrible, it's awful, it's a tragedy beyond endurance, that I can't get along with my Dad; anybody who can't do that is a worthless person; therefore, I'm worthless."

Ellis suggests that a number of irrational thoughts lead to awfulizing, for example: I have to be loved and approved by everyone who is important to me in my life. I must be totally competent and achieving. The house always has to be picked up, my desk clear, whatever. If any of these ideas is strong in your mind, you will inevitably be frustrated and you will come to the conclusion that life is terrible, and everything is awful since your standards are not met. Your irrational thoughts lead to strong negative feelings about yourself.

Do you awfulize? Pause for a bit and consider whether or not there are ways in which you do. Keep those thoughts in mind. If you are an "awfulizer," and most of us are to some extent, you need an antidote. What can you do to counter those sorrowing choices?

Use Baseball Reasoning

One thing you can do is use baseball reasoning. What is that?

Baseball players either give up the game or come to the conclusion that they cannot possibly hit a home run every time they come to bat. In fact, most of them are thrilled if they get on base a third of the time they come up. Many of them would be happy to hit a home run once in every forty times they are at the plate. In relationship terms, you are doomed to failure if you expect to hit a home run often—have a perfect encounter, really connect—more than a third of the time. If you set reasonable expectations for yourself you are more likely to be able to say you have succeeded.

My personal experience is that when I reach out to others for more than a superficial encounter more often than not it does not happen. I could pull back like a turtle, decide it is not worth the investment, and never try again. Instead, I step back, lick my wounds, tell myself (ungrammatically), "One out of three ain't bad," and sooner or later I go back for more.

It is one thing to decide you are not going to play baseball anymore because you cannot win all the time. It is quite another thing to decide you are not going to jump in and play the game of life because you cannot win all the time. Get in there and swing. The player who focuses on his or her failures is likely to fail again. Your average may be one in five, one in three, or better. One out of five "ain't bad." Focus on your successes and keep swinging.

Share the Power

It is exhausting to be involved in a power struggle—you and another person vying for control. If you come up as the winner in the struggle you may feel good about it at first, but it is difficult to enjoy the victory if the other person feels downtrodden, inferior. If the other person comes up as the winner in the struggle you may feel downtrodden, inferior—though as Eleanor Roosevelt said, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."

Take your share of the power; don't let another person have all the control in the relationship. Give away a share of the power; don't keep all the control in the relationship.

Television and motion picture scripts that show struggles for power are more dramatic than those that show power vacuums, so what we see dramatized tends to be skewed in that direction. It would be easy to conclude that power struggles characterize most relationships, especially those of spouses. It is my observation that power vacuums exist more often, and that the feelings we more often have surrounding the issue of power are those of sadness or boredom. To say it another way, in most relationships the characteristic sorrowing choice is that of feeling bored or sad because nothing much is happening in the relationship, rather than feeling downtrodden or inferior because the other person has all the power.

Most of us either make effective ruling choices involving power sharing or we make ineffective sorrowing choices—we wait around for others to take action. It is important that *you* have a part in the power in your relationships. If you do not, you are likely to become mired in negative feelings, in sorrowing choices.

A Warning

If you have been involved in a relationship that has a power vacuum and you try to make a major change, you may find that you are suddenly in the middle of a power struggle. You and the other person have been objects at rest, and, as the law of inertia suggests, an object at rest tends to stay at rest. Change is not easy for most of us, so we resist. Make change gradually and slowly. Share with your partner your intention to change what has become a drab relationship. Enlist his or her help—so you may both become objects in motion at the same time.

Structured Sorrowing Choices

Most of us avoid problems, so you probably do. Instead of collecting brown stamps and building toward a big explosion, you can become skilled in using *structured sorrowing choices* when you face a problem involving another.

Step 1. Say the person's name.

Step 2. Say, *when you*, and finish the clause with a clear statement of what the other person did or said.

Step 3. Say, *I feel*, and finish with a feeling word—avoid using *MAKES me feel, feel LIKE,* or *feel THAT.*

Suppose a co-worker tells you something you did was stupid. Your structured sorrowing response might be:

Sandy, when you tell me what I did was stupid, *I feel* rotten.

Or, in the past tense: *Sandy, when you* told me what I did was stupid, *I felt* rotten.

The choice you have made is better than sulking or holding your strong negative feeling inside, and it is also better than striking back or putting the other person down. If it is an honest statement, it is a choice you should be able to live with, even feel good about.

You may see it as disadvantageous to let the other person know that you are vulnerable, but it can be argued that it is advantageous. After all, we all are vulnerable.

We said at the top that sorrowing is always a self-choice. Since that is the case the person the choice has to be OK with first is *you*. There is no guarantee that a structured sorrowing choice, or any other sorrowing choice you make, will be OK with the other person. Most of us have learned to deny our strong feelings, so others

around us may expect us to hold them in. If you make the statement above, Sandy may think you broke an unspoken rule. Still, none of the other alternatives is likely to be *more OK* with both of you.

An observation. Similarly structured *enjoying* choices can contribute much to your relationships. Think how welcome it would be if your friend said to you, "_____, *when you* smile at me like that, *I feel* all nice and warm inside." You can *respond* similarly.

Thought-Stopping

Many of the repetitious thoughts that bother people are really recurring negative feelings—recurring sorrowing choices. "I can't do anything right," or "I'm no good," is not a factual statement, it is a self-defeating feeling. Most of these kinds of thoughts or feelings can be stopped by force of will through a process called thought-stopping.

When self-defeating feelings or thoughts trouble you it is possible for you to use thought-stopping. When the feeling or thought arises, simply say aloud, *Stop!*, or if the circumstances make that inappropriate, snap a rubber band worn on the wrist to enforce the internal thought. *Snap*. Force yourself to go on to a more positive thought.

Karen found that when she tried to fill the power vacuum that existed between her and her husband Jeff, she had a power struggle on her hands. In his own mind, Jeff needed to take the lead; he seldom did so, but he was threatened when Karen began to make suggestions regularly about things they might do together in the evenings, on vacation time, and so on. Jeff parried every suggestion and argued that Karen was emasculating him. Karen resorted to awfulizing for a while. Thought-stopping helped her internally and she found that structured sorrowing choices were useful when Jeff scolded her for taking the lead. Recently she said, "*Jeff, when you* got on me for suggesting where we might go for dinner—after I waited for you to take the lead, *I felt* really frustrated." That felt far better to Karen than her former internal messages: "Jeff is angry with me. I should have continued to wait. I'm a rotten wife if I say things that result in his feeling that he's less than a man." Karen found that when she presented her feelings directly, Jeff saw matters in a different light.

More Effective Choices

Choice Awareness supports the idea that if you engage in awfulizing, turning relatively minor inconveniences into tragedies, you need to develop more effective skills in making OK sorrowing choices. Part of the antidote to awfulizing is making sure both you and the other person share some of the power in the relationship. Two other aids to OK sorrowing are structured sorrowing choices and thought-stopping.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues. Take some time to focus on awfulizing and/or structured sorrowing choices, exploring how you use, or how you might use, those concepts in your life.

Next, sit quietly for several moments. Think about your strengths and abilities. When a negative thought emerges, say *Stop!*, or use the rubber band technique, and intervene. Think something more positive about yourself. Describe your experience with this activity.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

Reference

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26
Responding to Others' Sorrowing Choices

It is easier to respond positively to the OK sorrowing choices than to the OD sorrowing choices others make; but it is possible for us to make OK choices from among any of the CREST options whenever others are sad, angry, or hurt.

What is "the right thing" to say or do when others are sad, upset, frustrated, angry?

There is no single right thing.

You *can* take a cue from the injunction, do unto others as you would have them do unto you. But that will not always work—especially if you or the other person has learned not to admit to negative feelings. Somehow we have come to accept denial of negative feelings, "Oh, nothing's wrong," or thrashing around—because "I'm in a bad mood"—more readily than stating straightforwardly what the trouble is.

Using OK CREST Choices

Actually, when someone is upset it is *possible* for you to respond with any of the five CREST choices in OK ways, though none of your responses is guaranteed to be OK with the other person—especially if he or she denies that there is a problem.

Suppose you happen on a co-worker whose eyes are downcast. You know Gerry just received a mediocre employment evaluation. Here are some things you might say, coded according to the CREST system, and any of these choices *might* be seen by Gerry as OK.

C. Do you want to talk?

C. I know you're hurting, let me know if there's anything I can do, Gerry.

R. Hey, don't let it get you down. All the supervisor's evaluations were like yours.

R. C'mon over here and sit down. Blow off steam if you'd like to.

E. I'm with you, kid.

E. No matter what that evaluation says, I think you're the greatest.

S. What a bummer.

S. I feel for you right now. (Meaning: I hurt too.)

T. I think if you continue the way you have over the last month they'll forget the problem you had when you first came here.

T. When the going gets tough the tough get going. (This response is a rather superficial T/W choice with an overtone of ruling, but it *may* be OK with the other person.)

We have made the point that sorrowing choices fall into three basic groups. When you are troubled you may internalize, let the problem eat on you, and make choices that involve *miserableness*. Or you may externalize, strike out at others, and make choices that involve *meanness*. Or you may deal straightforwardly with the trouble, at minimum explaining it briefly so others know what is troubling you, at maximum working it through with a counselor or otherwise, making OK sorrowing choices. Since those three options describe the choices others make as well, let us look at how you might respond to each of these choices when they come your way.

Responding to Miserableness

It may be inevitable that the deep negative feelings of another person will resound in you and you will make sorrowing choices. Your spouse or friend describes a horrible accident he/she observed. You see in your mind the blood and gore and hear the voices of the injured and the last gasps of the dying person. When you say, "That must have been horrible," you are expressing your own sadness—making a sorrowing choice. If there are people around you who "enjoy poor health" and are always complaining, you may indeed feel empathy for them and share their concern to some degree. When you say, "I'm sorry your back isn't any better," you are making a combined caring and sorrowing choice. If a friend has had a recent encounter with an abusive spouse, you may cringe at the sight of the bruise, or at the reiteration of a hostile statement, and feel hurt yourself—again a sorrowing choice.

But you *could* respond with any of the other CREST choices.

Caring

One alternative choice is that of caring. In the accident instance you might say: "What can I do to help? Can I get you a cup of tea or coffee?" "Are you all right?" "I can tell you're really upset about that." In the enjoying-poor-health instance you might say: "Are you making any progress with your back?" "It must be a nuisance to have that nagging back problem all the time." In the abusive spouse instance you might simply comfort the person or say: "If you want me to I'll dial the women's shelter." Often caring is the most functional choice when another person is sorrowing.

Ruling

The choice that many people make when others are sorrowing is ruling. In the accident instance you might say: "Come on, sit down, tell me all about it, get it off your chest." "You need to do something to take your mind off that." In the enjoying-poor-health instance you might say: "Sit in *this* chair, it won't be so hard to get up." "You better tell your doctor about this new turn of events." In the abusive spouse instance you might say: "You've just got to do something to get away from that problem." Though choices in this group may be tempting, they are not always functional. The ownership of the problem shifts to you as the responder, and too often these choices may signal the start of a Why-Don't-You-Yes-But game.

Thinking/Working

Thinking/working responses are often chosen when others are sorrowing. In the accident instance you might say: "Did anyone call for the EMTs." "How near the accident were you?" In the enjoying-poor-health instance you might say: "What has your doctor told you to do about that?" "When my friend Dale had the same problem, the doctor said. . . ." In the abusive spouse instance you might say: "What do you suppose is bugging him?" "The new shelter is designed for such situations." As with ruling choices it is often tempting to make thinking/working choices when others are sorrowing, but they are not always useful. If the individual is caught up in the emotion of the moment, your immediate shift to logic may seem callous, unfeeling. Ultimately, logic is essential if the problem is to be solved, but it is often better to let the individual lead the way to exploring possible approaches to the problem, and to finding solutions.

Enjoying

The remaining choice that people have available to them when others are sorrowing is enjoying. Such choices may take the form of focusing on the person, joking, teasing, or distracting the individual from the matter he or she is facing. In the accident instance you might say: "I'm just so glad *you're* safe and sound." "You looked like you'd seen a ghost—and in a way I guess you had." In the enjoying-poor-health instance you might say: "I've never seen you looking better." In the abusive spouse instance you might say: "Well now you've hit bottom; there's nowhere to go but up." It may be tempting to make enjoying choices when others are sorrowing, and although eventually even humor may seem helpful, in the moment it may be seen as an unfeeling response.

The major point that should be made is that you have available to you, even in situations in which another person is hurting, a far broader range of choices than you may have thought possible. Your choice-making is likely to be much more effective if you pause briefly and scan the possibilities for an effective response that fits the situation, the person, and your relationship. In many circumstances your pause will lead you to make a caring choice, but when it does not, your alternative response may tend to fit the circumstances more suitably than others you might have made.

Responding to Self Pity

Before we leave this discussion let us return for a moment to the problem of responding to the person who "enjoys poor health" or who otherwise seems to run his or her tragedy or burden into the ground. Certainly it is possible to feed the self-pity that person exhibits, and we do not want to encourage that—not for long anyway. At the same time it does seem suitable for you to make a caring choice at the beginning of the encounter, at least to the point of acknowledging the source of the hurt. *Then* consider making a quick move to other OK choices. Over time you might make the following responses to a person in your life who focuses continually on his/her problems.

S & C. I'm sorry your back is still troubling you.

R. Today I'm determined to get you off that subject so you can forget it for a while.

T. I'd like to know what you remember of your parents and grandparents. I'm thinking about trying to put together a little family history.

T. What games and songs do you recall from when you were a child and a young adult?

E. I like hearing about the old days.

R. No, I don't want to get back into that just now.

E. You have the nicest smile when you let it out.

Effective responses to miserableness, like effective responses to other choices, benefit from prior thought, from the development of a broad range of choices, and from a willingness to initiate rather than always responding to the choices sent by others.

Responding to Meanness

As with *miserableness,* we can use each of the five CREST choices in responding to *meanness.* It is not easy to respond in an OK way if someone takes something that belongs to you, calls you stupid, or cuts in front of you to take a parking space you were maneuvering toward—but it is possible. We will use those three examples to illustrate how the various choices might be used.

For the first example let us use a situation a friend mentioned recently. At the end of his round of golf he reported to the clubhouse the loss of an expensive pen—purchased through a foreign car dealership and individually numbered. Weeks later he saw the manager of the course with what appeared to be his pen. He asked to see it, held it without looking at it, indicated when he had lost it, rattled off a portion of the ID number, then looked at the pen and showed the manager that the number corresponded with the one he recalled. The manager said that he had purchased it at a shopping mall (my friend is sure that was impossible) and refused to give it up.

For the second example, let us say that a co-worker says publicly that your opinion about women's rights (and that could be either a supportive or a hostile view) is stupid.

Finally, we will specify that the person who cut you off to get a parking space is about your size, age, and sex, and a career equal. That individual leers at you moments later in the hallway and says, "What were you trying to pull out there?"

We will use the labels PEN, STUPID, and PARKING as we look at these situations and consider choices that might be made in response.

Ruling

A gentle, assertive, ruling choice is possible in each instance:

PEN. I'm convinced that this is my pen, but I'll give it back to you if you insist it is yours.

STUPID. I'd appreciate it if you'd keep this discussion on a reasonable level. You have a right to your opinion and I have a right to mine.

PARKING. That space should have been mine. If you hadn't speeded up I'd have had it.

Firmer ruling choices are also possible, and, of course, you may wisely choose *not* to pursue the situation further either with ruling choices or with any of the other choices that follow.

Thinking/Working

Thinking/working choices might include:

PEN. I've got the rest of this number in mind now and I plan to check with the car dealership to see if that is the one that is registered to me.

STUPID. The fact of the matter is that millions of people agree with the opinion I just expressed.

PARKING. The way I saw it is that I was closer to that parking space than you.

Caring

Caring choices might include:

PEN. Since the pen is such a good one I can see that you wouldn't want to give it up.

STUPID. You seem troubled that anyone would take a different position than you do.

PARKING. Since it means so much to you, it's OK with me that you have the space.

Sorrowing

Sorrowing choices, which may be kept inside or expressed verbally, might include:

PEN. I feel really rotten that you (she/he—said internally or to another person) would take advantage of your (his/her) position like that and not admit that the pen is mine.

STUPID. *Jay, when you* call me stupid because I have a different opinion, *I feel* really annoyed.

PARKING. It bugs me that you (she/he—said internally or to another person) would almost cause an accident over nothing more than a parking space.

Enjoying Choices

Enjoying choices may also be stated internally or aloud:

PEN. (Laughing) I guess you really believe in the old saying, "Possession is nine points of the law."

STUPID. Sounds like a case of the pot calling the kettle black.

PARKING. (Chuckling) Hey, I'm sure you don't want to ruin your day, or mine, when it's just getting started.

The choices that will work for any two individuals cannot be predicted with total assurance, and the merits of any of the above choices can be debated. But the point is valid that in nearly every instance, even when you face an external sorrowing choice—meanness—from another person, you can search quickly through your mental computer and come up with a variety of choices that may work in the situation. If the other person is determined to have a negative encounter it may be that *no* choice of yours will be seen as OK. When a person sends that message clearly, non-verbally, the best choice you can make may be one you make internally.

Responding to OK Sorrowing Choices

When a friend or spouse says, "I'm really upset about something that happened at work today," your task is much easier than if you face meanness or miserableness, and you have a wide range of OK choices available to you. The most obvious thing to do is respond with a caring choice. The key to responding to the person's need is to find out what he or she wants from you, or to make your best guess about what that might be. "I'd like to help if I can." "Do you want to talk about it?" OR: "If you'd like me to leave so you can have some quiet time right now, just say so." Any of these responses may be seen as a caring choice.

Choices—Other than Caring

Alternatively, you may offer a ruling choice: "Let me bring you something cool to drink, and you just put your feet up and relax for a while." "Tell me about it." A thinking/working choice may also be suitable: "What happened?" A sorrowing choice may be appropriate unless it unduly redirects the concern to you: "When I see you

looking so troubled, it bothers me." Probably the least appropriate response in such a situation is that of enjoying; however, even that choice might be OK if it distracts only temporarily and if the other person fully understands that you have a positive intent: (Chuckling) "You look like you've lost your last friend."

Raoul had felt troubled for some time about his relationship with his younger brother. Paulo made few choices Raoul saw as OK. Whenever he was troubled, his brother drew inward for a while, then exploded. Raoul tended to give his brother a wide berth, but he wanted the two of them to get along better. Once recently he had commented that he was concerned that Paulo's girlfriend, Lisa, was playing him for a fool, accepting his gifts and going to expensive places with him, then laughing at him behind his back. In response, Paulo shouted, shook his fist, and ultimately charged out the door.

Raoul jotted down several statements that he believed might have changed the situation drastically:

"I'm sorry I brought it up. I know it's really not my business, but I care about you."

"OK. OK. Enough. I won't bring it up again."

"You're right. Sometimes I'm just too bossy for my own good."

"I care about you too much to want to see you get hurt. Then I hurt you myself."

Later at a quiet moment Raoul read some of his notes to his brother. Tears came to Paulo's eyes when he finally realized that behind what he saw as his brother's interference was a genuine, caring feeling for him. At that point, Paulo expressed his regret that Lisa did not share his feelings for her, but he told Raoul it was hard for him to give her up even though he knew he needed to.

A Wide Range of Choices

The intent of the Choice Awareness system is to demonstrate that there are many choices available to you in nearly every instance, whether the input you receive is positive or negative—OK or OD. If you, in Kipling's words, "can keep your head while all about you are losing theirs," it is probably because you are capable of using the great variety of choices you have available in nearly any circumstance.

The most difficult kinds of choices to respond to in OK ways involve OD sorrowing—meanness or miserableness. One true test of being an effective chooser is that you are able to make at least some OK responses in those difficult situations.

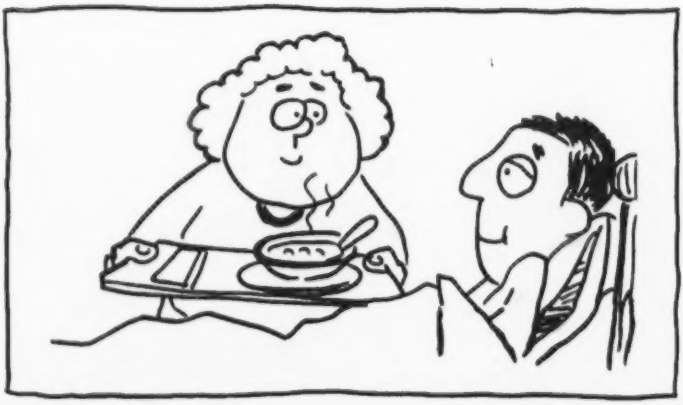
Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues.

You may then wish to write about your responses to a variety of situations, recent or long past, in which you had the opportunity to respond to miserableness, meanness, and the OK sorrowing choices of others. Did you respond in kind? Did you feel choice-less in the moment? Did you allow yourself to make fresh and new responses? For each situation, explore the choices you made and why they were appropriate or inappropriate. Explore alternative choices as well.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

27
Sorrowing Choices: The Career Connection



Some careers, more than others, seem to call for making sorrowing choices. People who experience too great a demand or too little opportunity to express sorrowing choices on the job may need avocational or other at-home opportunities that allow them to balance the choices they make in their careers.

As with other choices there is a career tie-in to sorrowing. No matter what your career, it can be sited somewhere on a continuum of emphasis on sorrowing choices. Further, you and every other person fit somewhere on a continuum of comfort in making sorrowing choices. If you are a funeral director, a police officer, a social worker, a counselor, or a homemaker, you may expect to make a variety of choices, but you should expect to encounter people who are in difficulty of some kind—people who are making sorrowing choices, people for whom you will feel empathy and concern. Though you cannot sorrow for them in the same sense that you might make ruling choices for them—suggesting what they might do—their frustrations have impact on you. You expect to be more directly involved in making sorrowing choices than you would if you were a laborer, a statistician, or a recreation director, to cite three examples.

If you enter a field that puts you in touch with people when they are making sorrowing choices and you are not comfortable with those choices, you may find yourself misplaced, and you may even need to consider making a career shift or a major change in your own pattern of choices. Further, if you are constantly around people who are making sorrowing choices you may need to create on-the-job or off-the-job outlets—with your co-workers, through your family, or as a volunteer—for making other choices.

Any Career May Lead to Sorrowing Choices

Any career has hidden possibilities that may lead you to make sorrowing choices. Nearly any career you might hold provides you with co-workers who make sorrowing choices. It is important that you remain open to the hurts and frustrations you and those around you experience. Denial has inevitable costs. Straightforwardly encountering your sorrows has inevitable advantages.

Take stock of the roles you play at home and at work. Chances are, both on and off the job there are many opportunities for you to share your sorrowing choices and respond to the sorrowing choices of others.

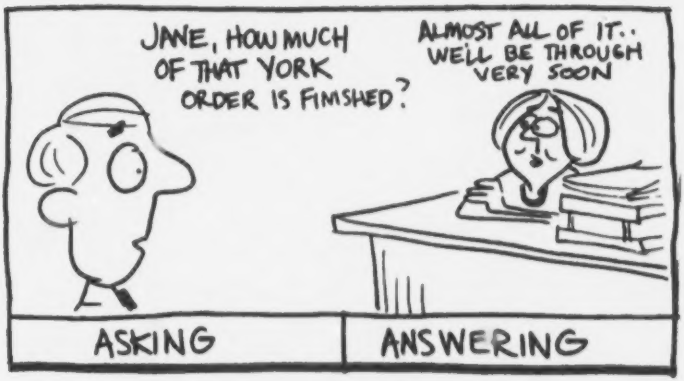
Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues.

Reflect on the sorrowing choices you make, and the sorrowing choices you encounter others making, in your career. If appropriate, discuss how you might beneficially change your patterns of responses when you or those around you have negative feelings.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

28
Thinking/Working Choices



Thinking/working choices are often useful. They may be made superficially, they may be based on injunctions and labels that are no longer relevant, or they may absorb so much of our time and energy that they squeeze out other choices that are needed or wanted by those around us.

We have made the point previously that thinking and working enter into all choices. No matter how little your mind participates in an action or a statement you make, it *is* involved; at some level or other you are thinking. No matter how little energy you put into your choice, that choice uses effort—at some level or other you are also working. So how can you differentiate thinking/working from the other CREST choices?

Remember tests that had such answers as: all of the above, none of the above? In a genuine sense, thinking/working choices fit the none-of-the-above category. A choice you make is thinking/working when you are not clearly responding to the need of another—or caring; when you are not obviously demonstrating leadership—or ruling; and when you are not primarily expressing a positive or a negative feeling—enjoying or sorrowing.

"What time is it?"

"Nine thirty."

"I need to be ready to leave in an hour."

"I ought to write Josie."

Looking up a telephone number.

Balancing the checkbook.

Planning the weekend's chores and activities.

These are everyday examples of thinking/working choices involving words and actions.

You may attach some special significance to the words thinking and working, believing that if you are doing either of those things you have to be deeply involved, engaged, and absorbed, but your thinking/working choices can be extremely shallow. You do many things every day on automatic pilot, as it were. You comb your hair, put on your clothes, make breakfast, pick up an item at the grocery store, thumb through a pile of "junkmail," skim pages in the newspaper, carry out the trash, watch TV, drive a familiar route, engage in a brief social contact. These actions and many others are superficial choices, but they belong in the thinking/working category.

Shallow vs. Deep Thinking/Working Choices

The fact of the matter is that you probably make more thinking/working choices than any of the other CREST choices, perhaps more than all the others combined; and most of your thinking and working choices are shallow. To some degree that is fine. You need routines. Those things you have done every day for years need not engage your full powers; it would be a nuisance if they did. But there is a problem in staying minimally engaged in great numbers of activities every day. It is easy to let them be your whole life.

If you have ever had the thought—and many people have—that life is passing you by, you may have developed a series of routines that do not take much thought or energy, so your life lacks challenge. Finding or creating challenge is the antidote.

Terri spent some time reviewing the week that just passed and she felt discouraged. It had been a week like many others. She had gone through the motions and had some pleasant moments, but the week had lacked any special challenge. Finally her thoughts wandered to an alumni magazine she had put aside. She had noticed

information about a tour of the Far East and dismissed it out of hand. She located the notice, spent some time in the library in absorbed reading about many of the points on the tour, and dashed off notes to a couple of friends to see if they might be interested in making the trip with her. "Funny," she thought, "since I did that I'm approaching everyday tasks with a new zest. I'm even walking with more bounce in my step. I'm not just letting life pass me by."

Superficiality Problems

Superficial thinking/working choices present several problems. What passes for thinking/working choices for many of us is just following old injunctions and acting-out old labels. To what extent do you do what you do because your parents' voices still ring in your head? "A place for everything and everything in its place," for example. If that injunction still clangs strongly in your ears, then no matter what the needs of the moment or of the people around you, you may have to stay up until the task is done. In the Robert Frost poem "Mending Wall" the protagonist meets his neighbor in the spring and they put back the stone wall between them, even though there are no cows to worry about—only pine trees and an apple orchard. "He moves in darkness as it seems to me,/ Not of woods only and the shade of trees./ He will not go behind his father's saying,/ And he likes having thought of it so well/ He says again, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'"

Old injunctions can be as useful as many of the other things you do on automatic pilot. They act as shortcuts and help you make quick decisions. The problem is that your parents may not have intended for you to follow the injunctions as rigidly as you may—*always* putting things away, *always* keeping a wall between you and others, not trusting particular groups of people, for example—and even if your parents intended those outcomes, *you* must live *your* life.

Life can only be engaging for you if you feel engaged.

Labels as Shortcuts

We let labels act as shortcuts for us. The shy one, sunshine, chip off the old block, meathead, gutsy, worthless. If that last label, worthless, was hung on you, you may approach the completion of a significant objective, a degree or a promotion perhaps, and do something that blocks its achievement. Even positive labels such as "the helpful one" can become a burden. If you follow it too rigidly you

may never let your wants and needs become known; therefore others do not know you and you may not even know yourself. Labels and injunctions need examination. They are fine if they really work for you, but they may mean that you are just fulfilling the expectations or the prophecies of another person. And they may well block your achievement of significant personal goals.

Time Fillers and Relationships

Perhaps you are among the people who spend great amounts of time being thoroughly absorbed in your own pursuits—working at your computer, keeping up your house or garden, reading copiously. If so, ask yourself whether or not the activity you engage in is superficial—ask if it serves primarily as a time-filler—as opposed to being a positive addiction that gives meaning to your life. Then consider the impact of the activity on others in your world. Does your involvement in the activity too often keep you away from the people you care most about? To say it another way, do you make thinking/working choices when others around you want or need other choices from you? If your answers to these questions do not suggest a need for change in your pattern of activity—great! If you are among the people who let absorbing or mindless activities build walls that hold out other people—listen up!

Everyday activities that thoroughly engage you can leave you drained and less than fully capable of responding to your spouse, children, friends, or family members. But activities that are time-fillers can also be wearing, and the outcome is the same. Most of the thinking/working choices you make are likely to be OK with those around you. The fact that you are reading or computing or gardening or exercising or doing office work at home is not likely to be a problem except at specific moments when others need or want something different from you. What is more likely to be a problem is if you spend so much time doing those things that others do not have the chance to know you, to feel your presence, to have your undivided attention, to experience your love and affection.

It is easy to rationalize, time and again, "He or she doesn't need me right now." And likely that is the case. The result can be that the individual has to do without you for too many "right nows." Eventually he or she may come to the conclusion that your involvement cannot be relied on, or he or she models your behavior, becomes engaged in other pursuits, and shuts you and others out of important aspects of his or her life.

OK/OD/UD Choices

The question is sometimes asked: Are some choices underdone, is there a UD dimension that parallels the OD dimension? If you have the thought that someone in your life, your father, for example, under-does (UDs) on caring or enjoying choices—a common complaint about fathers—a careful exploration of what he *does*, as opposed to what he *does not do*, may reveal that he ODs in the realm of thinking/working choices. It is entirely possible that people you care about, your spouse, your closest friend, your children, others, see you the same way.

A basic idea in Choice Awareness is that we act on habit. To say that another way, we make many superficial thinking/working choices, and we let labels and injunctions substitute for good, fresh thinking and acting in the moment. Most of our thinking/working choices are OK with those around us; as a result many adults get caught up in the allure of thinking/working choices and stress them over the other four CREST options—but we cannot build good relationships with an overemphasis on any one of the five choices.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues.

Now review the past week—what engaged your thoughts and your efforts, what kept you busy and absorbed? Did you read something that used your mind well and got you thinking deeply? What tasks challenged you? How much time did you spend off-the-job in pursuits that used your mental and physical powers? Did you do something that helped another person and at the same time helped you feel good about yourself? If you are not satisfied, what plans might you make so that you could feel more involved?

Consider the labels and injunctions that affect your life, and the extent to which you let yourself become involved in superficialities or in activities that close out others who are important in your life. Do your findings suggest that you need to change your thinking/working choice patterns? If so, what changes do you plan?

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

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Thinking/Working Choices: Other

We make some of our thinking/working choices in relation to others. We need to be comfortable in using our powers of thought and our efforts with all those around us, including superiors and subordinates. We also need to balance our thinking/working choices with the other CREST choices.

Thinking/working choices are choices we make mostly for ourselves. We think our private thoughts and carry out our tasks, and much of the time what we think or do has comparatively little direct impact on those around us. But at least some of the time we can think *for* someone else or do the work that belongs to another person, we can function on our own, we can think and work in a way that cooperatively involves other people, or we can leave the thinking and working choices to others around us.

Your Thinking/Working Patterns

When others are involved, are you more likely to (1) take control of the situation—turning some of the opportunities you have to make thinking/working choices into opportunities to make ruling choices, (2) function on your own, (3) share leadership and tasks

cooperatively—moving comfortably among thinking/working and ruling choices, or (4) act in ways that show you are dependent on others to lead? Which two of the terms below most often characterize your actions?

IN CONTROL	—	AUTONOMOUS
COOPERATIVE	—	DEPENDENT

We have suggested that most people see themselves as responders. If that assumption is correct and you are honest with yourself, the odds are that you lean to the terms COOPERATIVE and DEPENDENT, meaning that you are involved with others, but are inclined to await their leadership. Regardless of the two terms you selected, do your actions suit your wants and needs, and those of others around you?

To some degree your patterns of thinking/working choices are likely to change in response to the age, skills, power, and roles of those around you—but that need not necessarily be the case. You could be among the select few who exercise control regardless of the others who may be affected, or you may be a person who feels little power regardless of who else is involved. Some careers imply control, e.g., managers, or teachers with their students, but taking on a career assignment that calls for control is no guarantee that a feeling of comfort in exercising control will follow. In fact, Lee Canter (1976) suggests that the majority of teachers have problems specifically because they are unassertive—they are not sufficiently comfortable in establishing and exercising control.

Let us look a little deeper. Which of the terms above—IN CONTROL, AUTONOMOUS, COOPERATIVE, DEPENDENT—apply to you in your interactions with each of the following:

SUPERIORS/ELDERS	—	PEERS
SUBORDINATES	—	YOUNGER PERSONS

Certainly it is to be expected that, up to a point, superiors and elders will exercise control with you, and that you will exercise control with subordinates and younger persons. The fully mature person, however, exercises leadership at times with superiors and elders—perhaps through offering suggestions. He or she encourages subordinates and younger persons to take the lead from time to time by sharing the leadership and allowing others to be involved in solving problems. To carry an example we have just used a bit further, teachers, even those teachers who are in control with students, may be quite passive around school administrators and show

little leadership with peers. You are likely to be happiest with yourself if you participate in the full range of your relationships in dynamic, interactive, contributing, cooperative ways.

The Significance of Choices

I have a friend whose wife is highly-controlling. He teases her by saying that he takes charge of all the major issues that arise—what time the sun will come up, when the flowers will appear in the spring, and what month will succeed the present one, for example—and leaves the minor decisions to her. His teasing comment suggests another dimension of thinking/working choices. To what extent do you exercise leadership and permit yourself to make thinking/working choices when the choices that need to be made are: MINOR, MODERATE, or MAJOR in significance? Are you comfortable across the range of minor to major options, or do you defer to others except when the issues are relatively insignificant?

Let us combine these dimensions: Ideally you should feel comfortable in exercising control, in acting autonomously, and in functioning cooperatively, with peers, superiors, and subordinates, whether the issues are of minor, moderate, or major significance.

The Learning Process

Children are socialized to think that *enjoying choices* belong mostly to them; they also learn that *thinking/working choices* belong mostly to adults. Particularly as a very young child, and especially if you are a male, when you asked Dad or Mom if you could help with chores you may have been told, "You're too young; go on out and play," instead of being allowed or encouraged to participate in the work of the household. If your parents did that, you naturally assumed that your offer was not appreciated and your help was not needed. When you were more mature and more capable your parents may have enlisted or required your assistance, but by then you might have developed a habit of not helping. Also, you had learned to involve yourself in other activities, so you may not have been interested in doing the chores you were assigned. Furthermore, you had not developed the necessary skills and so you were not very good at what you were asked to do. Unless an activity is somehow intrinsically appealing and you are good at it, you are unlikely to wish to continue doing it—so you may have been loathe to attempt something you were not convinced you could do easily.

The most effective work habits are developed early in life and are encouraged all along the way. But thinking through and handling the opportunities that life presents is a never-ending series of choices. If you have not developed a high level of skill in making thinking/working choices, or if your efforts along those lines are shallow, you can give yourself permission to make the necessary changes, and gradually modify your patterns of choices. Just remember that maintaining balance among the CREST choices is as important as handling tasks in mature and effective ways.

CREST Choice Balance

When I think about the need to maintain balance among the CREST choices I am reminded of the relationship I mentioned in Chapter Nine, with a colleague I referred to as Professor X. Circumstances brought us together often, and at first I admired the way he always got directly to the business at hand. I saw him as bright and committed to our mutual task, and I liked that. After a while, though, I felt less and less positive about the relationship, since there was never a light moment, since we were "all business." Ultimately I came to dread our contacts.

After I had begun to work on the concepts of Choice Awareness, I asked myself if *my* choices might be part of the problem, and for a time I did not believe that could be the case. Then I raised a different question: whether I might do anything that would help our relationship change direction. That gave me a clue, and I developed a strategy for our next meeting.

When we met—in Professor X's office, as usual—I shared with him something funny I had heard earlier in the day. He actually chuckled. Encouraged, I asked him about his wife and family, and he smiled more than once and shared expansively. After few minutes we got to the task at hand, but my whole attitude was changed. I enjoyed even the serious parts of our dialogue.

For me, two major ideas emerged from that experience. First, that it was not Professor X's behavior that bothered me; it was my own. Instead of being my own person when I was with him, I mirrored his seriousness. I disliked my own narrow, thinking/working pattern of choices. Second, it became clearer to me than it had ever been before that any effective relationship calls for the full range of CREST choices, and that really worthwhile relationships cannot be built only on thinking/working choices.

The Importance of Thinking/Working Choices

Some of the most significant choices we can make in this life involve thinking and working. The most significant theories and discoveries humankind has evolved are largely the products of thinking/working choices. We all need to give ourselves permission to use the brains we have been given and undertake the tasks that are ours, as effectively as we can. We need to make it possible for those around us to engage their minds and undertake tasks that challenge them. We also need to keep our thinking/working choices in a reasonable balance with our other CREST choices—for the sake of our relationships.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues.

Then, if you choose, consider your functioning in thinking and working choices along the dimensions suggested in this chapter:

Control/autonomy/cooperation/dependence.

With superiors/peers/subordinates.

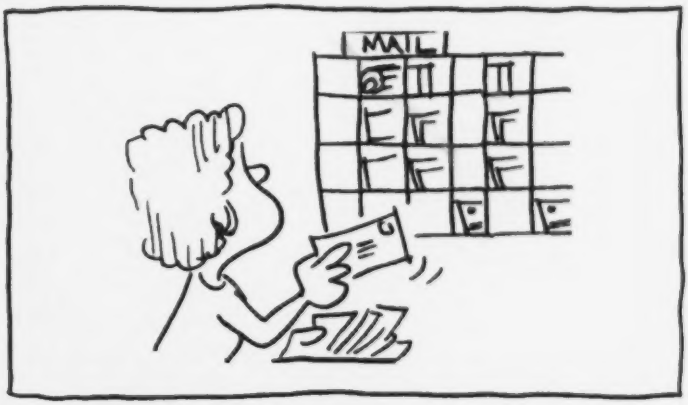
In major/moderate/minor choices.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

Reference

Canter, L. (1976). *Assertive discipline: A take-charge approach for today's educator.* Seal Beach, CA: Canter and Associates.

30
Thinking/Working Choices: The Career Connection



Some careers more than others seem to call for making thinking/working choices. People who experience too great a demand or too little opportunity to express thinking/working choices on the job may need avocational or other at-home opportunities that allow them to balance the choices they make in their careers.

It is patently obvious that there is a career tie-in to thinking/working choices. Certainly it is true that all careers require attention and effort on tasks. Comparatively speaking, however, some careers demand little thought or genuine physical effort—for example, repetitive assembling tasks. Some careers demand comparatively little thought once the basic skills are mastered, yet require a great deal of energy and effort—the tree trimmers whom I saw working across the way recently might serve as an example. Some careers exemplify the opposite, demanding much thought but comparatively little physical effort—lawyers, for example. Finally, some careers require a great deal of thought *and* action—think of the buyers/sellers on the floor of an exchange.

Not only do careers vary greatly in the balance of thinking and working choices, they also vary in the extent and depth of the thinking or working skills required. To cite one comparison, both a lawyer and an inspector on an assembly line might make one thinking choice after another, but a different level of thought is required to locate and make connections between legal precedents as against comparing a product that comes along a conveyor belt to a near-perfect model.

No matter what your career, homemaker included, it can be sited somewhere on a two-way diagram that reflects shallowness and depth of both thinking and working choices. And you, too, are likely to feel most comfortable when you function in a particular area on the same diagram of shallow and deep thinking and working choices.

	Thinking Choices	Thinking and Working Choices	Working Choices
Deep			
Moderate		X Your area of greatest comfort	
Shallow	X Your career		

If, as the above diagram suggests, you have entered a field that calls mostly for shallow thinking choices and you have a need to make more, and more complex, thinking and working choices, you may find yourself misplaced and you may need to consider making a career shift. Here I think of the number of women who have not prepared themselves for the working world, and find themselves buried for decades in jobs that do not challenge them sufficiently.

As we have suggested in exploring the other CREST choices, despite the apparent fit (or lack of fit) of thinking/working choices in your career, most careers allow opportunities to make thinking/working choices that can engage your attention in positive ways. In any event, whether you are female or male, if you are unchallenged on the job, and cannot relocate professionally, your best strategy may be to create on-the-job or off-the-job outlets for your energies.

Journaling—*On the CREST*

Read this chapter, then make a journal entry, using the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/-Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationships, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*—as cues.

Consider your career: to what extent does it give you opportunities to make both thinking and working choices of the depth that suits you? What changes, if any, might you make within your career, or outside it, that would serve your personal needs more adequately.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and assign it this page number.

31
SPA Activities

While the process of growth toward an enhanced quality of life may, at times, be somewhat difficult or painful, we believe that there should be joy along the way. As a consequence, we have included a number of *SPA activities* in the pages that follow. SPA activities are designed to enable you to experience the joy of knowing yourself positively.

In the physical world, people engage in spa activities that challenge them, that exercise their muscles, and that eventually produce in them a feeling of warmth and power. SPA activities here have similar objectives—challenging you to focus on yourself, your choices, and your interactions with others; providing experiences that are designed to enable you to set your goals higher, and extend your reach further; and eventually producing in you a similar feeling of warmth and power.

Like physical growth, personal growth cannot be gained exclusively through reading and reflection. To get the maximum benefit from the SPA activities that follow, you need to be a participant, not a spectator. Thus, we recommend that you: involve yourself in the suggested activities, recycle through them from time to time, develop additional spa activities on your own, and journal about the activities and date your entry each time.

SPA 1—One Thing I Can Do

If you are like most people, you may be inclined to ignore the fact that you are a wondrous creature and that there are many marvelous things you can do; you focus instead on the next challenge, perhaps on what is out of reach for you. Here you are encouraged to take back the wonderment and appreciation of some small thing you can do—so that you might appreciate yourself more. Focus on an action within your reach that connects directly to one of the five senses: seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and/or touching. Think what triumphs of body and mind each of those skills represents.

Do you, like most people, take them for granted?

If so, let us change that.

Take a few moments, right now, to reflect on or discuss one of the simple, but miraculous powers you possessed from infancy—based on the five senses. Enjoy that power as a triumph in your mind. Savor it. Reflect upon it. For a few moments at least, let your feeling of appreciation wipe out any thought you may have of something you *cannot* do.

SPA 1 Journal Entry—Write your observations about this activity. Use the key words—*Recall, Interpretation, +/- Feelings, Freeing, Self, Relationship, Implications, Agree/Disagree, Other*— as cues for extending your entry. Date your entry and label it SPA 1.

Make an entry for each spa activity as you complete it. Return to the reading periodically and make new entries. Do so especially after you have implemented new choices.

SPA 2—A Skill I Learned After a Struggle

Think about a skill you mastered after a struggle, maybe a struggle you have long forgotten. For example, you learned to walk, talk, read, write, ride a bicycle, and/or drive.

Have you ever watched a baby struggling to learn to walk? How many times did the little one stand, teetering, and look as though he or she might take that first step alone, then collapse to the floor, laughing, or continue to hold onto the chair, the playpen, or Mom or Dad, putting off that first solo step for another hour, day, or week?

Next followed a few days of tottering, insecure movement, one or two steps at first, then several; finally the child took off walking and claimed that hard-earned skill in such a confident way that it seemed to suggest that he or she always had been able to walk.

So it is, and so it will be, with many of the skills of life. We struggle and struggle, then take off. And we move on to the next hurdle without a nod of appreciation for the gain we have made.

Let us correct that.

Take a few moments, right now, to reflect on or discuss one of the simple, but miraculous skills you developed after a struggle. Walking. Talking. Sipping through a straw. Whistling. Reading. Writing. Making change. Riding a bicycle. Driving....

Think of that skill as a personal triumph. Appreciate the effort it took for you to master that skill. Savor it. Enjoy it with all the energy you can muster in this moment. For a few moments at least, let it wipe out any thought you may have of something you *cannot* do.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 2.

SPA 3—One Reason Others Appreciate Me

Modesty may prevent you from responding to this question readily, but have at it; it is important for you to understand your strengths. What is one reason others have to appreciate you?

Do you have good follow-through—do you do what you say you will do?

Are you a loyal friend--do you stand by others in need?

Are you sometimes thoughtful—do you occasionally do some little positive thing, perhaps without being asked, that makes the life of another person just a little easier for a moment?

Why would someone be glad he or she knows you?

Take two to three minutes to explore or discuss honestly, without bragging or withholding, one reason others have to appreciate you. Once you realize what characteristic of yours others may value, give it a little extra emphasis in your everyday life. See how it feels and what it produces when you emphasize, even just a little bit more than in the past, a characteristic others value in you.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 3.

SPA 4—One of My Positive Habits

As another basis for appreciating yourself, for loving yourself—so that you can love others in turn, and for achieving spa, take a few moments to think about one of your positive habits. Think about everyday actions you take that grease the wheels of progress either for yourself, for others, or both.

Do you get up on time?

Do you handle a few basic "chores" without any hassle, e.g., re-capping the toothpaste, bringing in the mail, bed-making, preparing breakfast, mowing the lawn, raking the leaves?

Do you interact with others in pleasant ways, e.g., greeting them, saying something pleasant when you leave or reenter a room, expressing thanks when it is due?

Chances are that you do so many small, habitual things in the course of a day that you may not even think of them for a while—so take your time.

Brainstorm or discuss the everyday positive habits many people have. Turn them into a checklist and see how you believe you rate as a creature of positive habits. Appreciate and savor your positive habits. Over time, see how it feels and what it produces if you add a positive habit or two to your present cluster of habits.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 4.

SPA 5—A Negative Habit I Have Under Control

If you are like most people you had negative habits along the way that you now have under control. What is one habit that you have given up? Think about such childhood habits as thumb-sucking or nail-biting, or such adolescent or adult habits as drinking to excess or smoking, for example.

You may be tempted to brush these habits off as insignificant precisely because they are under control, but they are useful reminders that you have choices concerning your habits. Take time to appreciate yourself, to love yourself, in some measure because you have been able to give up at least one negative habit.

Caution: Do not slide over to the negative side. You may indeed have habits remaining that you wish you could shed, but have not been able to do so—yet. It is fine to make a concerted effort to change such habits; but for now, savor the habits you have been able to shed in the past, without berating yourself over those that still challenge you.

Brainstorm or discuss the everyday negative habits many people have shed. Turn them into a checklist and see how you believe you rate as a creature who has shed negative habits. If relevant and feasible, work on shedding another negative habit.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 5.

SPA 6—Giving Up a Critical Label

Many people find that critical labels they heard when they were young affect them all their lives. If there is a negative label that you were given as a child you may bear the scars of it years later—you may be hurting from it now.

Damon complained to his counselor that his stepfather never used his name. Instead, he addressed him as Jerko, Stupid, or Dirt Bag, as in: "Shut up, Dirt Bag." When Damon complained, his stepfather said such things as, "Go bawl to your mother, Jerko."

As I talked with Damon's counselor, I shared one of my own experiences: I like my friends to call me Dick, since as a child I seldom heard the name Richard spoken, and if I heard it at all, it was usually said in annoyance or anger. I have a colleague whom I see frequently, and often as not he calls me Richard. I reply just as

frequently, "You may call me Dick." It has become a kind of game for us. I do not choose to slide back into childhood and rerun old, negative feelings, so I make my response good-humoredly, he chuckles, and we go on from there.

I suggested that the counselor check with Damon about saying the same kind of thing to his stepfather: "You may call me Damon." OR: "I'd like it better if you called me Damon." OR, in humor: "Damon's the name, third grade's (baseball's, etc.) my game." I saw the major advantages of teaching the boy an array of such responses as threefold: it *might* solve the problem, it *could* help him avoid internalizing the negative labels, and it *should* help him see that choices—other than becoming miserable, or lashing out and risking further hurt—were available to him.

I also encouraged the counselor to suggest to Damon that when all else fails, an internal message can be useful. In a Beetle Bailey cartoon, Sarge once asked if Beetle was about to come up with one of his "wise-guy" comments. Beetle's external response was, "No." Internally he said, "Anything worth saying would be over your head anyway, you clod." He walked away smiling to himself, saying, "It's the thought that counts."

The point is that Damon, you, and I may need strategies for coping with critical labels or names we don't like. As a child, were you called "the shy one," "sissy," or "mean as a striped snake," or given a nickname that bothered you? You do not have to let labels of any sort that others gave you years ago—or may be putting on you now—have power over you. You can make internal or external choices to counter labels that burden you.

Figure out the choices you make that affirm one of your negative labels, and what you could do to counter that label. Discuss the idea that you can choose to put *positive* labels on yourself—if you must have any labels at all.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 6.

SPA 7—A Good Feeling I Have Had

What was one good feeling you have had in your life? What were the circumstances that led you to have that good feeling? Think about it, bring it clearly to mind, recall all the senses you can tie to the feeling. Appreciate it, enjoy it all over again.

When life deals you the proverbial lemon, you can make lemonade—or, alternatively, you can call to mind a good feeling you have had. You may or may not be able to do anything that helps you duplicate that experience in the present, for a variety of reasons. If you are able to, great—do so. If not, just savor the recall.

Take a few minutes to recall or discuss some of the good feelings you have had and decide what you did to make them possible. Explore the idea that you can *sometimes* choose to have good feelings, if only through recalling them from the past.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 7.

SPA 8—A Positive Memory

Recall an event that was positive for you—something that happened that led you to feel joy or warmth inside. Select something other than the experience of the good feeling (SPA 7). What happened? What were the actions *you* took that helped that memory be positive? Think about it, bring it clearly to mind, recall the little details once more. Appreciate the memory all over again.

Take a few minutes to recall or discuss some of the good feelings you have had and explore what you did to make them possible. Consider the idea that you can sometimes choose to have good feelings, if only through recalling them from the past.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 8.

SPA 9—A Peaceful Scene I Can Call to Mind

Recall a peaceful scene that you once enjoyed—some grand vista, or something as tiny as a "flower in the crannied wall," you saw and appreciated. What made that scene memorable for you? What were the circumstances that allowed you to take the time to appreciate the scene? Think about it, bring it clearly to mind, recall as many details as you can. Appreciate the scene once again.

Whenever life seems stressful—and when does it not?—take time to bring to mind this peaceful scene. If you are able to wander to it once again, or to make arrangements to return to it, do so. If not, just appreciate the scene inside your head.

Take a few minutes to recall or discuss some of the peaceful scenes you have experienced. Consider what made those scenes memorable for you. Explore the idea that recalling positive mental pictures produces positive feelings.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 9.

SPA 10—Music

Bring to mind three pieces of music that you have long associated as positive. Sort through your mental files and select one because it energized you, a second because it calmed you, and a third because the words made an association that was meaningful to you. What made these each of those pieces of music memorable for you? What did *you* do in connection with this music that might have made each recall positive? Try to remember the scene and to hear once more all the nuances of the music, and the small details of the event. Appreciate its effects on you all over again.

The words to a little-known song, "The Olive Tree," from the musical Kismet, have special meaning for me, especially the part that goes, "Why be content with an olive when you could have the tree, why be content to be nothing when there's nothing you couldn't be."

Take a few minutes to recall or discuss two or three musical selections. Consider the idea that music can produce positive feelings.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 10.

SPA 11—Inspirational Literature

Recalling a poem, a story, an anecdote, or a book that inspired you, is a spa activity. Think about the literature you have read along the way and select one or two pieces that you recall fondly. What made that literature memorable? Bring to mind all you can concerning the circumstances that made that literature important to you. Appreciate the meaning of that literature all over again.

The last verse of Robert Frost's "Two Tramps in Mud Time" is very meaningful to me.

But yield who will to their separation,

My object in living is to unite

My avocation and my vocation

As my two eyes make one in sight.

Only where love and need are one,

And the work is play for mortal stakes,

Is the deed ever really done

For Heaven and the future's sakes.

Don't let an inhibition about poetry—or any kind of literature—keep *you* from this source of inspiration. Take some time now to recall or discuss some of the inspirational literature that has had meaning for you along the way, and explore what made it significant to you. Take time later to review literature that has meaning for you, to savor its inspirational value, and to share it with others. Let the wonderful words of life add spa to your day to day existence.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 11.

SPA 12—A Positive Action I Have Taken

Think about one or two actions you have taken, things you have done, that you have long associated as positive. The actions don't have to be grand, they may be the equivalent of helping an old person across the street—preferably one who wanted to go. What made those experiences memorable? What inspired you to take the actions you did? Appreciate the significance of those small actions all over again, and you achieve a spa experience.

Take some time now to recall or discuss the little details of those positive actions. If you can duplicate one of those actions with someone right now—in person or by telephone or letter, do so. If not, just enjoy your recall. Explore this idea: positive actions most often produce positive feelings.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 12.

SPA 13—Positive Responses to Stress

From time to time in your life you have doubtless made responses to stress that were functional for you. Think about your positive responses to a stressful situation: perhaps you went off and exercised vigorously, or you called a friend and talked it out, or you wrote an angry letter and then tore it up. Consider what led you to take the actions you did. Appreciate the significance of your responses all over again. As a spa experience, reward yourself for the effectiveness of your positive responses to stress.

When you feel stressed, bring to mind your successful actions. You may or may not be able to do anything to duplicate them at the time. If you are able to, great—do so. If not, just appreciate the effectiveness of your earlier choices.

Take some time now to recall or discuss some of the responses to stress that worked for you and why those responses seemed to help. Explore the idea that effective responses to stress produce positive feelings.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 13.

SPA 14—The Best Thing About Me

Give yourself at least three full minutes to respond to this question: what is the best thing about you? Do that right now. Don't yield to modesty, false or otherwise. As we have noted, you need to know what your greatest strengths are so that you can build on them.

Reflect on what you have just experienced. Did you find focusing on what is best about you difficult or satisfying or both? If you enjoyed it, that is great. If it was a difficult task for you, you probably need to focus more often on your strengths. You *have* strengths—you can let them work better for you if you realize what they are.

Take some time now to explore in some detail another of the best things about you. Decide why that characteristic is valuable and how you came to develop it. Reflect on the idea that knowing what is best about you is a basis for continued growth.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 14.

SPA 15—The Best Relationship I Have

If you focus on the best relationship you have, it may take a moment or two to sort the best from among several positives. On the other hand, it is conceivable that you might respond to that question by saying that none is particularly positive.

If you have more than one positive relationship, be thankful. Focus on one relationship and savor it. Think what choices you make that help sustain and nurture that relationship. Resolve to make choices that will keep that relationship at its present level, or make it even better.

If it is difficult for you to think of even one relationship that is positive, consider whether or not that seems to be a momentary condition. One test of the value of a relationship is to ask: what would your life be like if that person walked away today, never to return. If you say off-handedly, "I'd love it," about a relative, spouse, child, or co-worker, for example, think again. A relationship that gives you some grief may prove to be one you would miss greatly if it were cut off permanently.

If you are lacking in relationships that are positive, let that be a signal that you need to develop one or more positive relationships—using the ideas that have been suggested in *On the CREST.*

Take some time now to recall or discuss in greater detail the best relationship you have. Explore why that relationship is valuable, and how you have contributed to its growth and development.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 15.

SPA 16—My Goals in My Relationships

Think once again about the best relationship you have. What is your goal for that relationship? At the very least it might be to maintain it at the present level. At most it might be to make it soar higher and farther. Clearly, your relationship goal is positive.

Now shift gears. Think about your other significant relationships. Focus on one with which you are not satisfied. Take some time to consider what your goal is in that relationship. Even though that relationship may not be what you would wish it were, more likely than not your goal is positive. At the very least it might be to have more satisfactory interactions with that person.

If you are like most people you may project the problem on the other person; you would like him or her to "stop bugging" you. Even that can be seen as a positive goal if you turn it around and think of it in these terms: I would like to change the way things are so that Pat's actions trouble me less and we get along better.

In most of your relationships your long-range goals are positive—even if what you say and do is not always positive—so it is a spa experience to explore your goals.

Take some time now to explore your goals with the people who affect your life the most. What kinds of choices have *you* made that have contributed to the present state of those relationships? What choices could *you* make in the future that might help you move toward your goals with those people—to enhance your strong relationships, or to turn around those that are not strong.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 16.

SPA 17—My Most Significant Goal for Myself

Most of us go on day after day responding to the situations we face and the needs of the moment without considering the goals we have for ourselves—so you may well be in the same boat. It may take some digging to figure out your goals for yourself, but you do have long-range, positive self-goals. And realizing what those goals are is a spa experience.

One kind of goal you have emphasizes relationships. For example, you may want to patch up or improve your interactions with a particular person, or you may want to reach out to someone else, and see if you get back something positive.

A second kind of goal may involve your career. You may wish to move to a new job or be promoted, or it may be sufficient for you to maintain your level of success in your present work. Your relationship goals or your career goals may motivate you to positive action.

A third kind of goal is more elusive, but it may be of the greatest value to you. What do you want for yourself, personally—to gain a greater sense of meaning in your life, to be a better conversationalist, to be more open with others than you have been, or to improve yourself in some other way that seems appropriate to you?

Take some time now to explore your most significant individual goal. Consider why that goal is significant to you, and what choices you have been making, or could make, that would help you move toward its achievement. Decide on some small steps you could make that might help you achieve your long range goal for yourself.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 17.

SPA 18—How I Show Caring for Others

In the past, when others around you were hurting, upset, or angry, what did you do? Did you sometimes leave them alone? Did you try to smooth their ruffled feathers? Did you ever do something for others unasked—offer a glass of water, a soft drink, a cup of coffee; pat a person on the shoulder; listen deeply to what a person had to say? If you have done any of these things at the right time and in the right place—which is not always easy to determine—you have made OK caring choices toward others.

Think about actions you have taken when others have had strong negative feelings. Try to recall at least two times when you did something that seemed to be helpful. Give yourself credit for your success—or at least for your effort—as a spa experience.

Take some time to sort out what seemed to make your choices OK in those events. *More likely than not you responded in the way you would like to have had others respond to you.* Note that there can be a built-in error in that, however. Many times we *think* we would just like to be left alone. That leaves others feeling helpless to respond, and, unless we are working through the difficulty carefully and successfully on our own, it may do little for our benefit. It is probably better to err in the direction of reaching out to others who are in need than in the direction of holding back.

Take some time now to recall or discuss one or two of the most effective caring choices you have made, and explore how those choices have contributed to your relationships. Consider the idea that making OK caring choices is one of the essentials in building positive relationships, and in having positive feelings about yourself.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 18.

SPA 19—How I Show Caring for Myself

What little things do you do on a regular basis to take care of yourself? Do you eat and drink sensibly, get reasonable amounts of exercise and sleep, and take care of your physical needs? Then you are a person who shows caring for yourself.

Do you think positively about yourself? Are the messages you send to yourself positive—about your looks, your character, your accomplishments? Once again, you are a person who takes care of yourself.

You may feel a strong temptation to focus on what you *don't* do, the ways you *don't* show caring for yourself. But keep the accent on the positive instead. Surely there are many things you do that take care of your needs. The self-caring choices you make are desirable in their own right, and they make it easier for you to respond to the needs of others positively. Let your acknowledgment of how you care for yourself be a spa experience.

Take some time now to recall or discuss some of the ways in which you care for yourself, and explore why those actions are important. Discuss the idea that caring for yourself effectively increases the likelihood that you will care effectively for others as well. If appropriate, increase your use of self-caring choices.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 19.

SPA 20—One Way I Take Charge With Others

When we talked about ruling choices, we introduced the idea that there is often a power vacuum when two responders get together. Each tends to wait for the other to take the lead, and each eventually becomes frustrated because nothing seems to be happening. As a result, taking charge with others at times can be an important, positive move. And realizing that taking charge—making a positive suggestion, acting on conviction—is often necessary and desirable, makes it easier to keep doing so.

Think about it. When did you most recently make a suggestion about something you and a friend might do? Or ask someone to get something for you, "while you're up...?" Or indicate that it was time to switch to another activity, or to leave, because of a prior agreement. Chances are, in lots of small and large ways, you take charge—without realizing that you do so—especially with peers and those who are younger than you, or in your care.

Take some time now to recall or discuss one or two positive ways in which you take charge with others, and explore why those actions contribute to your relationships. Discuss the idea that acknowledging the ways in which you take charge positively is important in developing and maintaining your relationships. If you see yourself as taking charge too seldom or too often, let that be a signal to you to change your pattern of action, using the ideas that have been suggested in *On the CREST.*

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 20.

SPA 21—One Way I Take Charge With Myself

When it comes to how they take charge with themselves, people seem to fall into three clusters. The smallest group shows very little self discipline; these people set too few limits on themselves, and they tend to be seen as internally focused, even selfish, by others. The group at the other end of the continuum, which may be the largest of the three, sets overly high expectations; as a result these people overburden themselves with internal, self-ruling statements—taking charge of themselves too often and too rigidly, allowing too seldom for freedom and spontaneity. By contrast, the middle group exhibits an appropriate pattern of self-ruling choices; these people set reasonable expectations for themselves, they send positive self-ruling messages, they remain open to experiences, and they readily forgive themselves when the things they try do not work out, or when minor difficulties arise.

To which group do you belong?

If you are in the middle group, the group of people who set reasonable self-expectations, enjoy that reality. Let it be a spa experience for you to appreciate the pattern of self-ruling you have developed, and think positively about those people who have contributed to that pattern.

If you are at either extreme, you can take action to modify your behaviors and to achieve spa in doing so. But since our objective here is that of helping you achieve spa *now*, we encourage you *now* to refocus. Whether you are inclined to show too little self-discipline, or too much, doubtless in some minor (and perhaps major) ways you *do* take charge of yourself positively and reasonably—at least at times. It may take some thought for you to come up with ways in which you make reasonable self-ruling choices, but, no doubt, you make such choices at least now and then.

If you are stuck for a response, consider your eating and drinking habits, the amount of sleep you get, the ways in which you follow through on agreements, the kind of friend you are, how you carry out tasks on the job, etc. It is likely that in one or more of those facets of life you can locate a way in which you make self-ruling choices that are neither too rigid nor too "loose." And gaining that understanding provides your present opportunity for spa.

Take some time now to recall or discuss one or more of the positive ways in which you take charge of yourself; indicate why those choices, however small, are valuable in your life. Explore the idea that acknowledging how you take charge of yourself is likely to make it easier for you to continue to make those kinds of choices. If appropriate, modify your use of self-ruling choices—decreasing or increasing their use in your life.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 21.

SPA 22—My In-the-Moment Enjoying Choices

When those little moments arise in which others might smile or laugh or pat someone on the back or pay a compliment, what do *you* do? If you are skilled and generous in making in-the-moment enjoying choices, you act similarly. If so, savor that skill and that generosity, enjoy it, appreciate it—as spa. If not, what then?

Whatever you do, do not berate yourself for your lack of skill or generosity in such moments—remember, we are into spa here. Instead, take another look. Think about times when you *did* take such actions. You may not be as skillful or as generous as those you hold up as models for yourself, but it is unlikely that you are completely withholding in such matters. Think back to childhood if necessary.

Take some time now to recall or discuss some of the ways in which you make positive, in-the-moment enjoying choices, and explore why those choices are significant for you. Consider the importance of making in-the-moment enjoying choices in your relationships.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 22.

SPA 23—How I Handle Sadness and Frustration

While you may well be among the vast majority of people who do not handle sadness and frustration well, no doubt you handle some of your negative experiences effectively.

Have you *ever* thought through a problem and found a solution to it? Have you *ever* shared your negative feelings briefly and straightforwardly with someone else and felt some relief in doing so? Have you *ever* put aside your own needs briefly in a negative situation and helped someone else, and found that as a result of that reaching out you felt better yourself? Have you *ever* pounded a pillow, pumped iron, or exercised in some other way as an outlet for a negative feeling, and come away from that experience feeling better than you did before the situation arose?

Focus on two or three times when you responded to your sadness or frustration in a way that helped alleviate the situation—a way that hurt no one else, and seemed to help you. Appreciate the effectiveness of your actions. Experience spa in recalling your effective actions in negative situations, whether they have been frequent or few and far between.

If on reflection you find that you make very few effective or OK sorrowing choices, then build a plan for making one the next time some rather predictable action of another person, or some frustrating experience, rears its ugly head—again. Let the process of thinking through what you will do that is better than what you have done in the past, the execution of your plans, and savoring the positive outcomes afterwards, be spa experiences for you.

Take some time now to recall or discuss one or two ways in which you have responded to your sadness or frustration with OK sorrowing choices, and explore why those choices are or were OK. Analyze your actions and extract an idea that may be useful in the future—and plan to put that idea to use the next time it is relevant.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 23.

SPA 24—My Positive Thinking Choices

You may well be among the majority of people who tend to rerun old messages in lieu of thinking in fresh, current terms, or who in other ways think shallowly. Still, it is likely that at least some of your thinking is current enough, deep enough, and relevant enough to deserve your own acknowledgment, and recalling evidences of that can be a spa experience for you.

What large or small problems have you thought about and approached effectively? What thoughts have you had that led you to actions that avoided problems. For example, what checks did you realize you needed to write, or bills you needed to pay, so that you did not incur financing charges or more negative outcomes? In what relationship have you planned to make better choices, and then carried out your plan effectively? What vacation, trip, or other activity have you planned for and completed successfully?

Take some time now to recall or discuss two or three examples of OK thinking choices you have made, and indicate why those choices were relevant or significant. Experience spa as you recall your effective thinking choices. Explore the idea that making OK thinking choices contributes to a positive sense of self, and is likely to contribute to positive relationships as well. If appropriate, modify your use of these choices as needed by decreasing or increasing your use of them.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 24.

SPA 25—My Positive Working Choices

People who are highly self-critical tend to believe that little they do is worthwhile. If you are among those people you may not believe that what you do has value. Nonetheless, it is likely that many of your actions—your working choices—contribute in positive ways to your own existence and to that of others. Whether you are a card-carrying self-critic or not, what you do deserves acknowledgment, and its recall can create a spa experience for you.

Thinking about actions you need to take is important, but insufficient; the loop is not complete until the action is taken. Two old adages relate to situations that are thought about without follow-through: procrastination is the thief of time, and the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Frequently, it is essential to take action.

What large or small problems have you acted upon? What have you done in a timely fashion that avoided a problem? What have you said or done that improved one or more of your relationships? How did you act, what are some of the things you said or did, that helped a vacation, trip, or other activity turn out to be successful?

Take some time now to recall or discuss two or three choices you have made in the recent past that required timely action on your part, and that provide evidence that you sometimes make positive or OK working choices. Experience spa in recalling your effective working choices. Consider why those choices were of value for you, and extract an idea that may be useful in the future—and plan to use that idea the next time it seems relevant.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 25.

SPA 26—Choices I Make to Feel Good About Others

What choices do you make that give importance to others? Do you listen a bit more deeply to the significant people in your life? Do you anticipate seeing them when that is about to happen? Do you think about them and regret their absence when they or you are away? Those are choices you make that involve feeling good about others—and making those choices is not likely to require a major expenditure of effort.

To paraphrase an earlier statement: Perhaps all you do that is different with those who are of particular significance to you is to listen just a bit harder, to send your messages a bit more to those persons than to others, and to call those others your friend. It does not sound like much, and it does not have to be much, but you sense a difference and those other people do too (Nelson, 1977, p. 227).

What feelings do you *choose* to have about those people who are closest to you? Do you let your positive feelings for them—loving, liking, or caring—come through? What goals do you have for your relationship with them? Are you motivated to maintain or improve the quality of your most positive and significant relationships? What do you actually do to maintain or improve those relationships?

Take some time now to recall or discuss at least two choices you have made recently that involved feeling good about others, and indicate how those choices expressed your positive feelings. Explore the idea that making such choices contributes to positive relationships, and is likely to contribute to a positive sense of self as well.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 26.

Reference

Nelson, R. C. (1977). *Choosing a better way to live*. Lake Park, FL: GuideLines Press.

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SPA 27—Choices I Make to Feel Good About Me

What choices do you make that suggest you believe you are worthwhile? Do you engage in activities that help you feel good about yourself—through exercise, through relating to others, or even through taking care of your tasks? What positive things do you say internally about yourself? Your answers to those questions should suggest choices you make that involve feeling good about yourself—and making those choices need not require a great deal of effort.

Take some time now to recall or discuss two or three choices you have made in the recent past that gave you a good feeling about yourself. These may be little momentary actions you took for yourself, or they may reflect more significant actions. Perhaps you asserted yourself when you might otherwise have responded in a less effective manner. Maybe you took a little more time in grooming yourself and felt good about the effects. You may have completed a chore you had been putting off and found that the effort or the outcome gave you pleasure. Experience spa in recalling those choices.

If it should be that you can find very few examples of choices you have made recently which involved feeling good about yourself, stop right now and voice a positive self-statement, e.g., "I'm a neat person to be around," or take an action that will help you feel good about you, e.g., brush your hair, take a nap, complete a task you need to do. Let making that statement or carrying out that action, and savoring the positive feeling that results, be spa experiences for you.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 27.

SPA 28—Choices I Make for Meaning

What choices do you make that bring meaning to your life? In this culture, people seem to be judged to a significant degree by what they *have*, however, possessions are inadequate sources of satisfaction when the issue of genuine meaning is raised. For most people, it seems that meaning derives from what they *give*, and to whom, rather than what they *have*, or what they receive.

What gifts do you make of time, energy, and/or resources to those you know, or are aware of, who are in need? Is there an elderly or youthful relative to whom you give attention without thought of the benefits or the rewards? Do you volunteer in some way that allows you to share some of your wealth of time or energy or resources with others? Is there a cause you lend yourself to that gives you satisfaction? Is there a relationship that contributes to a sense of meaning in your life? Is there an organization, a church, even a social group to whom you have committed yourself? Experience spa in recalling what gives meaning to your life.

If you have been working away at the daily grind without attending to the issue of meaning, and as a result have no meaningful commitments, a thought of Viktor Frankl's may be relevant. Frankl (1963) suggested that all lives have meaning and that it is every person's task to discover and fulfill the meaning in his or her own life. Spend some time in discovering what *does* or *might* give your life meaning: a cause, a person, or a relationship that is, or could be, of significance to you. Think carefully and deeply about it. If relevant, decide on an action you might take. Carry out your plan when the opportunity presents itself. Let carrying out that action be a spa experience for you.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 28.

Reference

Frankl, V. (1963). *Man's search for meaning: An introduction to logotherapy.* New York: Washington Square Press.

SPA 29—Choices I Make to Be Fully Alive

During the program, *The message of the myth*, in the televised series, *The power of myth*, Joseph Campbell (Campbell & Moyers, 1988) commented to Bill Moyers that what people are seeking is an experience of being alive. Think about your experiences in this life. What are some of the times when you felt fully alive, wondrously connected with another person, with God, with nature, with the world? The phrase, "a mountaintop experience," has been coined to describe a thrill that is often connected to nature, but that may occur elsewhere as well. Another source of wonderful aliveness for most people is experienced as they build relationships, as they find and create a deep friendship or a new love with another person. And for many people it would be in prayer or through connectedness to God that their greatest sense of being alive has occurred.

Television advertising would have us believe that one brand of beer would lead us to say, "It doesn't get any better than this." The truth of the matter is that the natural highs of life, like a "Rocky Mountain High," are the ones that stay with us longest—and leave no hangovers or damaged relationships to contend with. It *doesn't* get any better than *that*.

The experience of being alive is not restricted to major events. Many summers ago, when my mother-in-law, Margaret Harvey Mitchell, visited us in West Lafayette, Indiana by train, she commented enthusiastically about the mile upon mile of corn and soybean fields she had passed. She did not find them tiring, as many others might have. The experience of being alive can be experienced in such simple actions as smelling the roses, as the saying goes—or savoring the corn.

Take some time now to recall or discuss an experience you have had during which you felt fully alive. Think about the choices you made to put yourself in that place, and to be open to the experience before you. Experience spa in recalling that experience and the choices you made. Consider what you might do in the future to create the conditions in which such life-giving experiences might occur. If you cannot name one event or relationship in which you felt fully, deeply alive, decide on an action you can take now. Carry out your plan and let it be a spa experience for you.

Make your journal entry now, date it, and label it SPA 29.

Afterword

If you have completed all the readings, activities, and journaling suggestions, where do you go from here?

We have already suggested that you recycle through any or all of the readings from time to time, and journal again, and yet again, concerning the ideas explored—since they will generate different thoughts each time you explore them, and will bring you to new levels of growth.

We challenge you, eventually, to decide for yourself—to choose for yourself—your own new avenues that you will travel to spa. Remain alert to your world and you may see spa opportunities that we have not even considered.

You can also decide to make the kinds of choices that will create a positive environment for you and for those around you—and help you move toward your goals for yourself and with others.

Life is a journey that is made up of one choice after another. Choose to enjoy the trip. Get a life—if you do not already have one. It's your choice.

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Selected Reference

Nelson, R.C. (1990). *Choice awareness: A systematic, eclectic counseling theory.* Minneapolis, MN: Educational Media Corporation.

On the CREST:

Growing through Effective Choices

by Richard C. Nelson, Ph. D.

In *On the CREST*, Professor Nelson has provided a straightforward way for individuals to look at how they make choices in their lives, and how they might make more effective choices in the future.

- *On the CREST* is *a self-help guide* that counselors and other helpers may encourage their clients to explore. The concepts of Choice Awareness are presented in simple language so that the reader may use them to make more effective choices, to grow personally, and to build a better life.
- *On the CREST* is *an aid in counseling*. Counselors, psychologists, and other helpers may give ***assigned tasks*** to their clients, e.g., "I'd like to ask you to read chapter one in *On the CREST* before next time, then let's talk about your reflections, and what you wrote in your journal."
- *On the CREST* is *a group process guide*—"for the rest of us." Everyday people may use *On the CREST* as a foundation for forming self-help groups—on their own or with the assistance of a counselor.
- *On the CREST* is designed to serve as a supplementary source in the preparation of counselors, psychologists, and other helpers.

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